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PRINCE RUPERT'S NAMESAKE



RUPERT SALUTING THE OLD WOMAN.

PRINCE RUPERT'S NAMESAKE

OR

AFTER THE RESTORATION

BY

EMILY WEAVER

Author of "My Lady Nell," "The Rabbi's Sons," etc.

EDINBURGH & LONDON

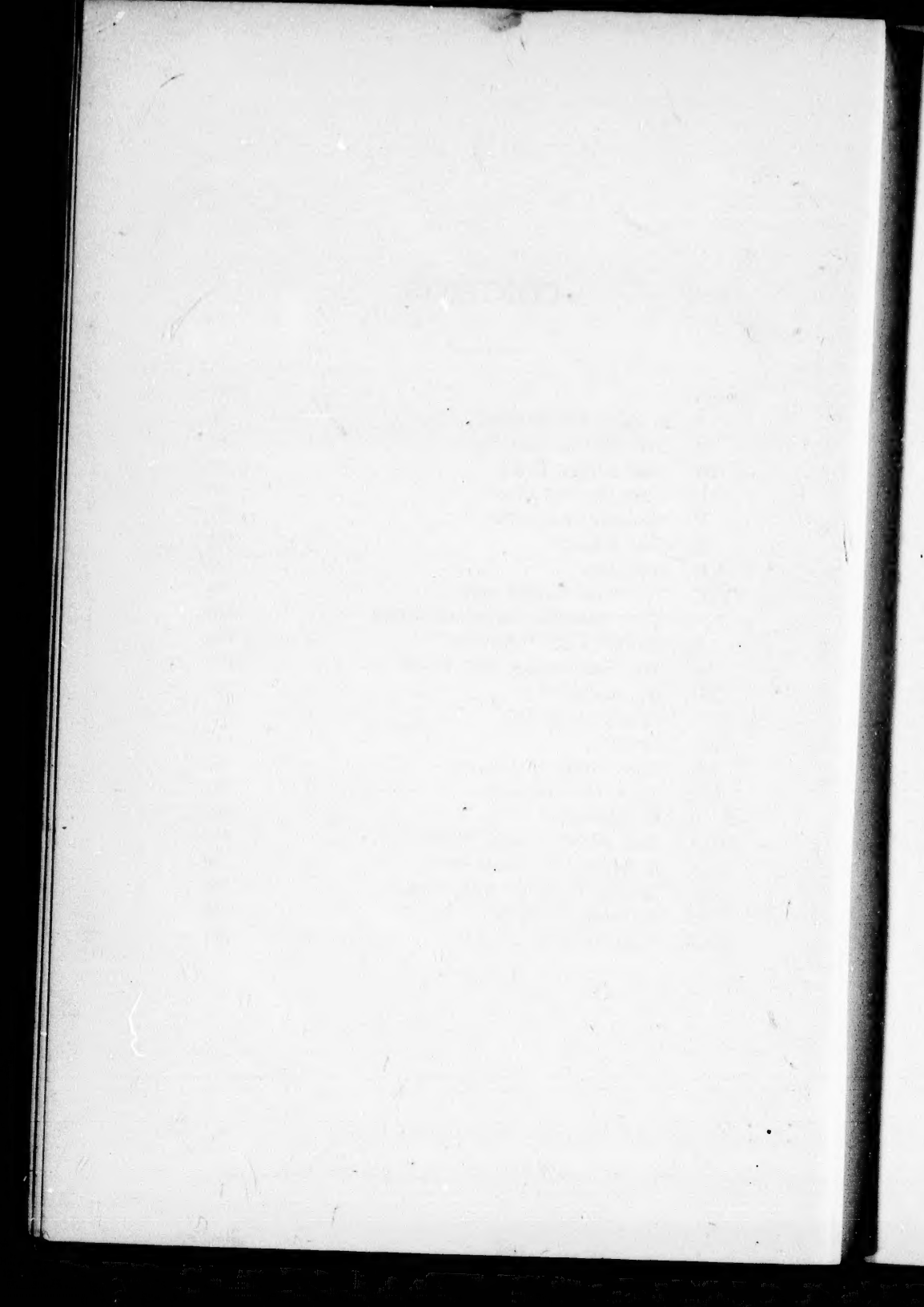
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MADGE AND RUPERT	5
II. THE COACH AND SIX	16
III. THE ABBEY HALL	30
IV. LOST ON THE MOSS	44
V. MAKING OF POETRY	67
VI. THE PRINCE	84
VII. NAVARRE	102
VIII. THE OLD SHOEMAKER	122
IX. THE ABBOT'S TREASURE CHEST	146
X. HENRY VII's "ANGELS"	164
XI. THE SERVICE IN THE WOOD	180
XII. HIS MAJESTY	196
XIII. COURT GALLANTS	213
XIV. SHUT UP	235
XV. THE STING OF DEATH	257
XVI. TALK OF TREASON	281
XVII. IN NEWGATE	294
XVIII. THE HUMPBACKED PEDDLER	313
XIX. A DIFFICULT PROBLEM	334
XX. IN THE PATH OF THE FIRE	350
XXI. MADGE AT COURT	368
XXII. LAST WORDS	381



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CHAPTER I.

MADGE AND RUPERT.

I CANNOT but think, Rupert, that his majesty is to be blamed. How can he let his friends starve? How can he thus forget us after all our house hath done for him and his? We used to promise ourselves that all would be well when the king had his own again. Methinks he gives all to his new favorites."

The girl spoke eagerly and impatiently. Her companion made no answer for a moment; at last he said doubtfully: "Mayhap the fault rests with grandfather himself. The king is reputed generous enough, and if he did but know of our needs, I make no doubt he would repay somewhat of all that hath been expended and lost in his cause."

Madge shook her head. "Father had as lief starve as play the beggar. That trade becomes not one of condition."

"Surely there is no disgrace in pressing for payment of so just debts ! We cannot sit still, Madge, while all goes to rack ; something must be attempted. If it were not that grandfather needs me to get in the wood and go a-hunting, I would strive to make interest to get a ship. Perhaps the prince would help me to it."

Madge once more shook her head, saying with a smile, "They would never make a boy like you captain, Rupert ; but I doubt not times will mend with us."

"Not if we do naught to mend them. I am nigh on sixteen ; if I mistake not, there are captains in his majesty's navy little older."

"But you are no seaman, Ru."

"And they are not either, Madge. The master orders the working of the ship ; the captain needs but to rule and lead his men. I could desire nothing better than to follow the prince to battle, either by land or water. Nay, there are times when I could find it in my heart to grieve that peace had come whiles I was still too young to lift the sword in defense of our noble king."

"The war has wrought us misery enough," said Madge. "For mine own particular I wish that his majesty's father, of blessed memory, had seen fit to accommodate matters with the Parliament men at the first beginning of the troubles. It would have spared both himself and his friends grief and loss."

"Nay, but, Madge, it was impossible. How could the king stoop to submit to the commands of his own subjects? and it was no less the Round-heads demanded of him. They would have had him for their slave. He would have been unworthy of his crown had he tamely borne with so great dishonor."

"Ah, well, I blame him not. Mother says he was a most gallant and noble gentleman, every inch a king; and when I hear her tell of his royal bearing and saintly patience in the hands of his wicked enemies, I feel that I too could have given everything to save him. It is only when one sees those who have been rebels from the first set up in power and wealth over our heads because, forsooth, they gave their voice at the eleventh hour for bringing home the king—it is only at such times I feel that we are wronged and shamed unjustly."

"It is hard, Madge, I admit, to see a rebel in possession of our lands; but, trust me, there are better times in store. It shall go hard if I do not win back our rights in some fashion or other, ere all is done."

"Have you heard, Rupert, that Sir John has writ word to his family to expect him home to-day?"

"Ay, Madge; and I have heard more than that. He brings with him a new wife, and she they say is the daughter of as true-hearted a Cavalier as ever drew breath."

"Shame on her, then," cried Madge, "for a disloyal rebel and traitress!"

"Nay, Madge, the king himself was present at her wedding. Sir John Elmer is a very considerable person at court."

"Mayhap, then, that is why we can come by no better justice. Let us rest here a while, Ru. Those clouds look like foul weather, and I am both hot and weary."

So saying, Madge threw herself down on the grass by the wayside. Overhead the leaves of the trees hung motionless in the heavy air; and not a chirp or twitter broke the silence. A dull red light fell on the gloomy wood that bordered the road on either side, for the sultry autumn day was drawing to its close, and dark, low-hanging clouds gave promise of a coming storm.

Rupert stood looking down the road with the grave, earnest gaze of one whose thoughts are far away from the scene before him. He was tall for his years, and though his figure was still slender and boyish, an outdoor life had developed his muscles and rendered him both strong and active. Dark hair falling in curls on his shoulders, according to the manner of the time, framed a face of remarkable beauty, to which a pair of well-arched eyebrows and merry brown eyes lent the chief charm, while the healthy hue of his complexion and the firmness of mouth and chin redeemed it from the charge of overdelicacy and girlish-

ness which otherwise might have been brought against it.

The slight likeness which existed between the boy and his companion might have suggested that they were brother and sister ; but the relationship between them, though they were nearly of the same age, was that of nephew and aunt.

Madge was also tall, graceful, and well-formed, but her face, though not unpleasing, was by no means regularly beautiful. Like Rupert's, it was oval in outline, with a low, broad forehead, and the nose was straight and clear-cut ; but slightly projecting upper teeth detracted from the beauty of an otherwise well-formed mouth and chin. Her complexion was dark and brown, her gray eyes were somewhat restless in expression, and her black hair, though neither wavy nor curly, was of such rough and obstinate texture that it could not be reduced to a decent submission to the brush, but always exhibited a tendency to stand out rampantly round the head of its owner like a shadowy aureole.

The attire of both was rather shabby and threadbare, but it was carefully and neatly arranged. To an observant eye it told plainly and pathetically enough the story of a painful struggle against poverty ; for, though their garments were old-fashioned and faded, they were of finer material than those usually worn by the peasantry.

Rupert was still gazing abstractedly down

the road when Madge rose to her feet, exclaiming, —

“Look, Ru! who is that coming up behind there? Can it be Sir John?”

“Scarcely; perhaps one of his servants, sent on before to prepare for his coming. He would not be afoot.”

“Whoever it be, the man hath an odd appearance. Look how he stands still to glance before and behind, and then comes on apace.”

“Mayhap he is a highwayman escaping from the constables,” suggested Rupert, watching him with interest, for in their lonely, secluded life the appearance of a stranger was an event.

“If so, the less we have to say about the poor wretch the better. I would not for a fortune be the means of giving him up to punishment!”

“Nor I. By the way, Margery, if I cannot get a ship, perchance I had best take to the road,” remarked Rupert, smiling.

“For shame, Rupert!” cried Madge quickly. “Talk not of such wickedness and folly. The heir of our house should leave such jests to them of mean sort.”

“But, Aunt Margery, seriously, I have heard of gentlemen taking to the road. Nowadays little other chance of redeeming our fortune is left to us poor gentlemen.”

Margery deigned no answer to this speech. Two things in it displeased her. First of all,

Rupert never called her Aunt Margery except when he wished to tease her. Secondly, he had but stated a painful truth with regard to the highwaymen. More than one gentleman by birth was actually engaged in that wicked and disreputable course; and so much of the glamour of romance was cast over their wild exploits that their mode of life was popularly regarded with more admiration than abhorrence. Madge did not really fear that Rupert had any grain of serious meaning in his professed intention of taking this means to redeem their broken fortunes, but it was a subject upon which even jesting was distasteful. The spot on which they stood had been the scene of daring crimes more than once within the last ten years.

Rupert did not pursue the subject, for the stranger had advanced to within earshot. His appearance was no less suspicious on a nearer view than it had been in the distance. When he caught sight of them he pulled his large hat lower over his forehead and muffled the cloak he wore about his face in spite of the heat, as if he feared to be seen.

"Methinks yonder comes the prince of highwaymen," murmured Rupert. "What shall we do, Madge, if he pulls out a brace of pistols and bids us stand and deliver?"

"Hush!" said Madge. "He *is* going to speak to us, I do believe."

The stranger made an awkward bow, but did not remove his hat, and, advancing toward them, begged to know the way to Denham.

"Right on, good sir," said Rupert, "through the wood and across the common. Beware of leaving the road, for in places the marsh is treacherous and dangerous to one who knows not the country; and you, I take it, from your speech and dress, are strange in these parts."

"Ay, sir; strange enough. Mayhap you will have the further goodness to direct me to the dwelling of one Dr. Blackwell."

"Dr. Blackwell!" exclaimed Rupert. "He died ten years ago, my man."

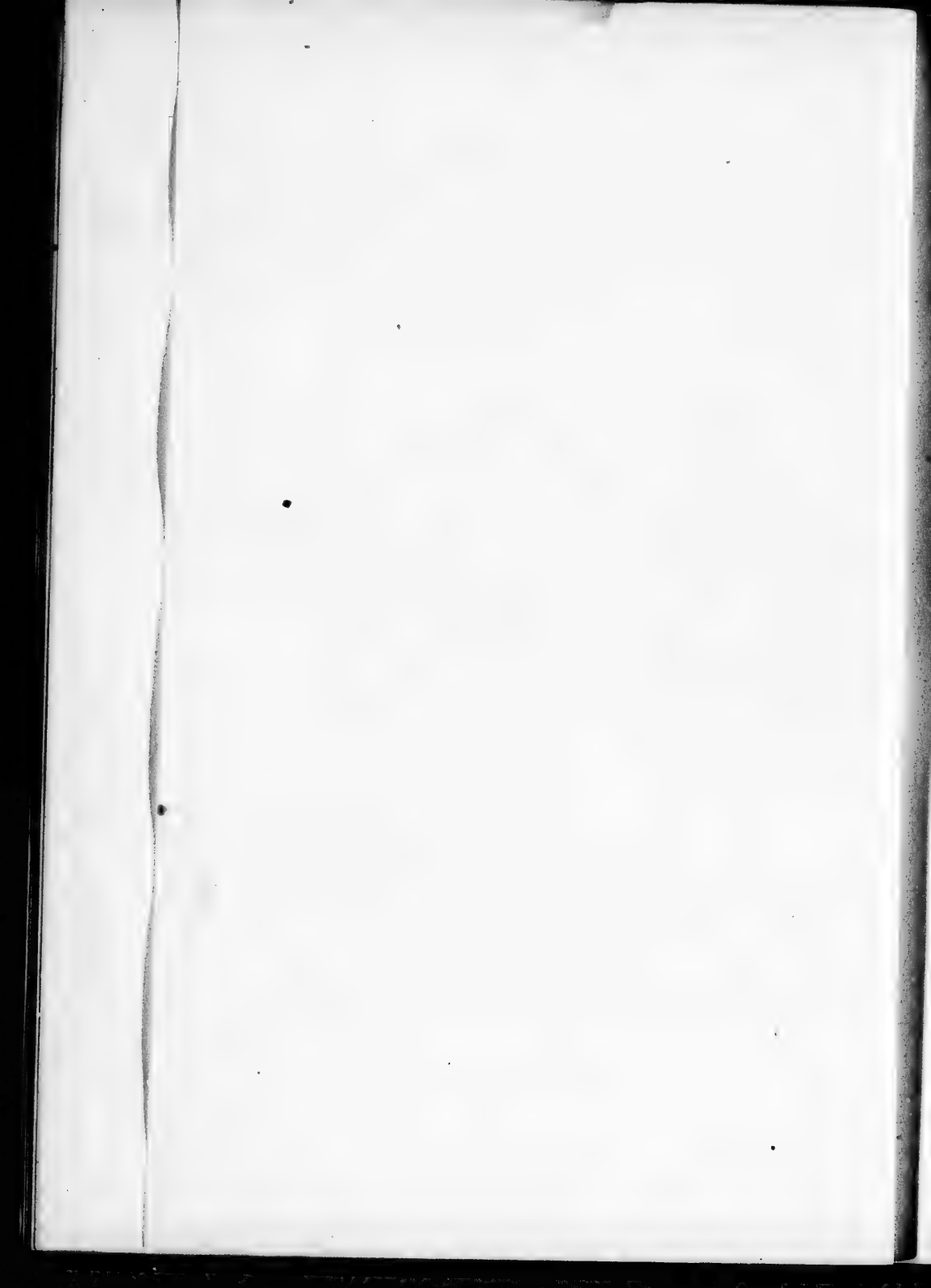
"Ah! I have been long in foreign parts. I had a letter to deliver to him, that is all," said the stranger, turning as if to go, then hesitating and coming back. "May I trespass on your patience, young sir, so far as to crave information where I may get lodging for a night or two, till I am refreshed and rested sufficiently to continue my journey?"

"Widow Martin might give you lodging," Rupert was beginning, when Madge whispered something in his ear and he stopped abruptly with a reddening face.

"What road must I take to find this good woman's house?" asked the man after a lengthened pause, during which both parties to the conversation had been diligently employing their eyes.



"DR. BLACKWELL!" EXCLAIMED RUPERT. "HE DIED TEN YEARS
AGO, MY MAN."



"It were easy to direct you, sir, but mayhap Widow Martin would not be best pleased were we to send her a guest of whom we know no more than that he is a stranger in these parts," said Madge severely.

"Your remark is just, madam; and yet were I to tell you my name you would still be none the wiser concerning me. Nevertheless, if it please you, I will tell you this much: I am called Giles Hartley, and I have spent many years in America and more at sea. Now, as confidence deserves confidence, do me the honor to inform me by what name you are known."

"This is Mistress Margery Staynor, daughter of Squire Staynor, some time of Denham Abbey, and I am his grandson Rupert," said the lad impulsively, though Margery frowned and shook her head.

"I heard of Squire Staynor years ago as a noble Cavalier," said the man slowly. "Doth he not still live in the old towers on the hill?"

"Yea and nay! The old towers are gone, all but the least considerable of them—shattered to the very ground by the rebels' cannon; but in that one Squire Staynor still finds shelter for his gray head."

"Rupert," said Madge reprovingly, "the storm seems gathering apace. It is time we hastened home. As for you, sir, your best plan would be to cross the marsh ere daylight fails and seek

shelter at The Crown and Scepter. It will not be denied you there, if you have money to pay the charges, at least."

The man bowed once more and went slowly on his way.

"Rupert," said Madge, looking after his retreating figure, "why did you talk so openly to that sorry fellow? What boots it to him that our towers are shattered and that we are fain to take refuge in a corner of the abbey?"

Rupert laughed. "That the fact is grievous enough, I pretend not to deny, Madge; but that speaking of it makes it any the worse I do not see."

"But why speak of it to him, Ru?"

"Listen, Madge! don't you hear carriage wheels? It must be Sir John Elmer. I wish we could see them pass."

"Nay, Ru, we cannot stay here like gaping country folk to see the great folk go by. By mine own consent I would never afford this upstart Sir John that triumph!"

"Ay! but Madge, now confess, if you could see without being seen, would you not like a glance at the man and his fair wife? They say she has wondrous wit and beauty. For mine own part, it would like me mightily to see the great coach and horses which he is bringing up from London."

"Do you remember the oak tree over yonder where we used to sit when we were children?"

said Madge suddenly. She was as anxious as Rupert to see the show, if only she could contrive it without compromising her dignity.

"The very thing!" cried Rupert. "I'll help you up. An oak may surely serve us in this strait as well as it served the king."

CHAPTER II.

THE COACH AND SIX.

THE oak toward which Madge and Rupert bent their steps was a gnarled and venerable tree that had weathered the storms of more than a century. Twelve or fifteen feet from the ground a great arm was thrust out almost across the road, whilst higher up a succession of smaller boughs formed a leafy arbor admirably adapted for purposes of concealment. The only difficulty was to attain this charming bower; but as Madge was inclined to be what is now called a tomboy, she was not without experience in the science of tree-climbing, though latterly, in deference to her mother's wishes, she had not indulged in the exercise as frequently as she would have liked. On this occasion, however, she felt that the end justified the means, and, dexterously availing herself of every point of vantage offered by the knots and twists of the rugged trunk, she was soon comfortably ensconced in her place of observation, while Rupert perched on one of the boughs above her head.

For a moment after gaining their position, they were silent, listening intently to the nearing rattle and lumbering of some heavy vehicle.

"Suppose it should only be old Farmer Bennett with his flour sacks?" suggested Rupert, jumping up and down on his branch to pass the time.

"For pity's sake, Ru, do be still. Think how cheap and ridiculous we shall feel if you make a plunge into the carriage amongst Lady Elmer's finery."

Rupert laughed.

"No fear, Madge, for my lady's braveries. The coach roof will hold, I doubt not, at the worst. They are slow travelers, surely."

"Hist! I think I hear their voices," cried Madge warningly. "What was that? lightning?"

"It is they. I can see the coach, gilded from top to bottom. Stir not, Madge; here comes a servant. It would be rare sport if they took us for highwaymen!"

"Ay, Ru; and if so, like enough they'll take a shot at us."

The top-heavy, windowless coach came on slowly, though it was drawn by no less than six fine horses; but to the disappointment of the conspirators they found they could see little or nothing of its inmates, for they were almost directly above it. They had, however, an excellent view of the gorgeously painted though mud bespattered carriage, with the handsome horses and richly liveried servants.

As it chanced, they had chosen their position

just above an execrable bit of road, where the mud was so deep that it might almost have suggested Bunyan's Slough of Despond. By way of improvement huge logs and stones had been flung into the quagmire, which, being far from sufficient to fill it up, played the part of hidden rocks at sea, and were perhaps responsible for the wreckage of many vehicles that might have escaped the mud.

The mounted servant got over this place without any serious mishap, but it was another thing to pilot over the heavy coach. Before the driver had taken in the situation the leaders were plunging up to their girths. He tried to cheer them on with voice and whip, but only succeeded in exciting the spirited animals. In another moment the great carriage was fast in the mud, with its six horses wildly jumping and struggling in inextricable confusion, while the servants ran hither and thither shouting and exclaiming, cracking their whips, and catching at the bridles, without any definite idea of the object to be gained by these proceedings.

Just as the excitement was at its height, a sudden shout was raised of "Murder! murder! the highwaymen are upon us!" and two of the servants fled in opposite directions, still shrieking "Murder!" as they went. The coach door was flung open and, regardless of the mud, Lady Elmer threw herself out, and clinging to her

husband's arm besought him to take heed to run into no danger. Sir John, who from the first had been doing his utmost to restore order, tried to reassure her, and drawing out a pair of pistols declared himself ready for any number of robbers. No one knew how the alarm had arisen, for the two brave servants were now at least a quarter of a mile away.

By this time the gloom was so intense that the pair in the tree could only see the dim outlines of those on the road below. Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning revealed the whole scene, and mingling with the thunder that followed instantaneously, a wild scream rang through the air. It was from the lips of Lady Elmer's maid.

"Look to the oak, Sir John!" she gasped out, "the oak! there are men in it. Oh, we shall all be murdered!"

Sir John glanced upward and saw the dark outline of a human figure in the tree; but even while he looked there was a scramble and a slip and the figure lay on the ground before him. Quick as thought he drew his sword, but Rupert, quicker still, at once regained his feet and his dignity. Advancing with a bow which would have done credit to a courtier, he said gravely:—

"I imagine, sir, that I have the honor of addressing Sir John Elmer."

The young man smiled, returned the courtly salute, and said:—

"You are right, fair sir; though I know not to whom I have the pleasure of speaking."

"Rupert Staynor, at your service, sir; and if I can be of any use to you in your present distress, pray command me."

"Thank you, young sir. Know you then where I can send for assistance in getting out my coach and horses?"

"I fear there is little hope of aid nearer than Denham, a mile and a half away. Our own house is hard by, but my grandfather makes shift to do without servants. Nevertheless, perhaps your lady and her maid will be pleased to accept shelter under our poor roof until you are ready to proceed on your journey."

"What say you, Edith? will you and Williams and Harold take advantage of this kind offer?"

Lady Elmer, whose face was concealed by a kind of mask called a vizard, just then beginning to be fashionable, thanked Rupert very courteously for his civility, but declined his invitation, and the lad went to help Sir John and his servants in the discouraging task of getting the coach out of the mud hole. All this time Rupert was very uncomfortable at the thought of poor Miadge perched in the tree, but he did not know how to extricate without betraying her.

The storm had begun now in earnest; the lightning was flashing every instant, while continuous peals of thunder roared overhead. At last rain

began to pour down in torrents, and Rupert, unable to bear it longer, threw down the rail with which he was working, went to the foot of the oak tree and shouted:—

“Madge, Madge, come down! The tree may be struck!”

A hand was laid on his mouth, and Madge said in his ear:—

“Be quiet, Rupert; I *am* down.”

“How did you contrive it?” asked the lad.
“I never saw you!”

“Because you were not looking, Ru. I got down as you did, by a combination of scrambling and falling, though I did not make a graceful bow at the end, because there was no one to see. But, Ru, we ought to go home. What will mother think?”

“I know not; we will tell her all. But, Madge, I must to work. This coach will never be out till midnight. Look! they are all ready to start lifting again.”

“Stay one moment,” cried Sir John, going to the coach door. “Harold, I will help you out. It is not safe to stay within. The coach may be overturned any moment.”

“Very well, sir; I will do as you please,” was the reply; and a tall slight boy alighted. He seemed to walk with difficulty, and Sir John supported him carefully to where Lady Elmer and her maid waited beside the road. Madge had crossed

to them, and was begging them to take shelter in her father's house; but the lady still courteously refused their hospitality.

The coach had been emptied of all it contained, and trunks and boxes lay scattered on the grass; but by this time the horses were so discouraged by their repeated failures to move it that first one and then another refused to draw. At last, after an indescribable amount of plunging and struggling, they were started all together; but, alas! the coach had scarcely moved a yard when one of the hind wheels came off.

"This last mishap do finish our chance of getting on to-night, Sir John," cried the old coachman. "You and the lady had best take this young gentleman's offer, and Jim and me and the rest will take the horses on to the village yonder."

Thus it was settled at last, much to Sir John's distaste.

Margery, not always the madcap she had seemed on this occasion, hurried across the fields through the storm to make what preparation was possible for their unexpected guests, and to tell her father and mother the story of their adventure.

Twenty years earlier Denham Abbey had been one of the most magnificent country houses in the county of Cheshire. It was built on a low hill, commanding a wide and beautiful view of rich

woods and fertile pastures, watered by a small river that flowed through the park. It had been a great quadrangular structure of gray stone, with many towers and imposing battlements. During the war it had been strongly fortified and Mrs. Staynor had held it for weeks against the army of Fairfax, during the absence of her husband, who had been in attendance on the king. Strong as it was, however, the cannon of the Roundheads had effected a breach in the walls, and in punishment for its long resistance the whole building had been reduced to ruins, with the exception of two or three small rooms and one tower.

Misfortune had followed misfortune. Squire Staynor had fallen into the hands of the enemy at Marston Moor and had suffered a long imprisonment. Three of his four sons had followed him to the war and now slept in bloody graves; of the other neither Mr. nor Mrs. Staynor ever spoke. Whether he were living or dead they did not know, for long years had passed since he had parted from them to join the ranks of the *rebels*. This grief had fallen more heavily upon his mother than the deaths of all her other sons, for with her loyalty was a matter of religion, and shame and indignation mingled with her sorrow. Geoffrey alone of all her sons had shown marked inclination for study. She had dreamed of a brilliant future for him as a scholar or a politician, which should add new luster to his ancient name. Alas! instead of

fame and honor, he had brought disgrace upon them all—a disgrace so black and indelible that nothing remained but to cast him off forever, though the sacrifice involved the bitterest anguish that human heart can bear. From the day that Geoffrey Staynor fled to the Parliament in London he had been with one consent regarded as dead; and yet the outraged love of his mother lived on against her will. Who can say what sleepless hours were nightly passed in thought and prayer for him? Who can tell with what vain effort her imagination strove to follow her lost boy in his wanderings? Yet it was she, rather than her husband, who was utterly relentless and implacable. It was she who had forbidden him to return till he had humbly confessed his treachery to the king. It was she whose reproaches had been most bitter and passionate.

Of her own children one only, her daughter Margery, remained to console her in the poverty and misfortune that had overshadowed these latter years. Affectionate mother as she was, she loved her son's child with an even more passionate devotion. Rupert was born at The Hague, in the year and month of King Charles' "martyrdom." Prince Rupert, then at Helvoetsluys, employed in making preparations for a somewhat piratical naval expedition for the benefit of the royal cause, "stood godfather," to the child and gave him his own name. The prince had no more enthusiastic

admirer than Edward Staynor ; but a sudden fever prevented his following Rupert to sea. He recovered, but his young wife died, and putting his child under the care of his mother he attended his royal master to Scotland, and fell at Worcester in that fight which Oliver was wont to call his "crowning mercy."

Before leaving England, Squire Staynor had been obliged to sell by far the larger part of his estates, at a price much below their real value, and upon the money thus realized the family contrived to subsist, sometimes in exile, sometimes in concealment, till the course of events brought about the restoration of the king to his hereditary throne. The remainder of Richard Staynor's lands had been confiscated by the Parliament, and upon the reëstablishment of the old form of government his claim to this portion of his estate was admitted, but he received no compensation for his overwhelming losses. Burdened with debts contracted in the king's service, and in receipt of barely a tithe of his former income, the squire and his household were almost in want of the necessaries of life. The residue of his estate was so heavily mortgaged that it seemed utterly unlikely that Rupert would ever inherit one of the broad acres that had belonged to his ancestors. In the meanwhile the almost destitute family found a refuge amongst the ruins of their old home, and lived, like the cottagers about them, on

the least costly food that would serve to keep them alive.

Yet in this extremity Squire Staynor found life by no means unenjoyable. When his creditors were not too clamorous, he possessed the fortunate ability of dismissing them entirely from his thoughts. He had followed his king to battle when he conceived that duty called him thither, but his was not a warlike temperament. He disliked the bustle and excitement of war nearly as much as he hated its cruelties and bloodshed. His grief for his sons was tempered by a holy resignation to the will of God, and now in the evening of his days (so deplorably wretched as to outward appearance) he was happy and contented. He had one great resource that many a time stood him in good stead by drawing away his mind from his losses. This was his earnest devotion to science. In the topmost room of the turret he spent many peaceful hours each day amongst the retorts and crucibles of a small laboratory which he had fitted up in the earliest days of his return, when he still had hope of compensation from the king. He was engaged in writing a book on metals, which involved many curious and interesting experiments, and this occupied his time both pleasantly and profitably; for in the course of his investigations he made one or two discoveries which earned him a high reputation among the philosophers of the Royal Society.

Richard Staynor was at this time about seventy years of age. In person he was slight, spare, and scarcely above the middle height. Thin locks of snowy hair and a beard of venerable length and whiteness set off by contrast the healthy hues of his complexion. A broad, high forehead, thin cheeks, and blue-gray eyes complete the picture.

His wife was fifteen years younger and had been a great beauty in her earlier days. Her still abundant hair was streaked with gray, but her black eyes flashed and sparkled with the fire of a passionate nature but half subdued. Her height and the cast of her features gave her a proud and imperial air which was not lessened by the stately grace of her slightest motions.

Madge rapidly threaded her way through the ruins, which were illuminated now and then by vivid flashes of lightning, to a door in the angle of the tower. Lifting the heavy latch, she entered a room lighted at the farther end by a wood fire on the hearth of a wide chimney, and crossing to where her mother sat beside it she threw herself down on her knees and began to tell her tale, but so eagerly and incoherently that her listeners found it no easy matter to understand the cause of the delay. All they understood was that some one had come to grief in the mud and that Rupert was bringing the travelers home.

Mrs. Staynor reproved her daughter gently for

climbing the tree, but the squire only patted the girl on the head and smilingly bade her not to lead Rupert into mischief. Then Madge lit a candle and set it on a wooden table in the center of the room; but the dancing firelight seemed still to have it all its own way, flickering here on faded hangings and there on bare stone walls which there had not been tapestry enough to cover. A battered suit of armor hung between two windows with pointed arches and diamond-shaped panes, whilst above the chimney-piece hung ancient swords, daggers, and firearms artistically arranged. An old picture of a crusading ancestor hung above the door, and in a little recess containing a polished table and a richly cushioned chair hung a portrait of Mrs. Staynor as she had been in the days of her youth and beauty, before misfortune came upon her. The recess might have been a shrine dedicated to the memory of other days, for it contained almost all the relics of past splendor that the Staynors now possessed. One or two small ornaments and a massive silver tankard were on the table, and a worn Persian rug lay on the floor, while an old-fashioned guitar rested against the wall in one corner.

The dark oak floor in the rest of the room was destitute of mat or carpet, and the chairs were of plain wood and clumsy manufacture.

Madge moved about briskly, setting on the table such fare as the house afforded and arrang-

ing the common earthenware and pewter dishes to as much advantage as possible. When all was done she regarded the feast doubtfully. A pitcher of milk, another of ale, a little butter, the remains of a pair of wild ducks which had served for dinner, and a loaf of dark rye bread made but a poor appearance, and the girl felt annoyed to be obliged thus to show their poverty to the Roundhead baronet and his lady.

"Mother," she exclaimed, "will you not change your gown? Lady Elmer is most nobly clad."

The name caught Mrs. Staynor's attention. "Lady *Elmer*, my daughter!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, mother; did I not tell you? our neighbor Sir John Elmer's wife. I wonder much that they have not already come. I think the gentleman at least was by no means willing to accept of our hospitality. Doubtless his conscience troubled him in remembering of how his good had been our ill fortune."

"What sort of person is he, Margery?" inquired the squire placidly.

"So far as I was able to observe him in the darkness, he is most tall and comely. I should scarcely have guessed him to be a rebel and a Roundhead!"

"Madge, my child, he hath received the king's pardon; it is not for us to use ill words concerning him," said the old man gently.

CHAPTER III.

THE ABBEY HALL.

LADY ELMER'S brother, Harold Clive, was the heir of an untitled gentleman of great wealth. More fortunate than most of the Cavaliers, his possessions had been little impaired by the civil war, and his guardians were so careless and liberal that though he was not yet of age his estates were practically under his own control. His only sister, Edith, three years older than himself, had had so handsome a portion and was so fair of face that all the needy gallants about the court aspired to her hand. To their utter disgust she bestowed her favor on Sir John Elmer, whose family had distinguished itself by zealous support of the Protector, until his death had threatened to throw the country into utter confusion, and all order-loving citizens, in fear of the despotism of Oliver's terrible army, had combined to call back the king. Charles had approved her choice, for though he no longer claimed the right of the absolute disposal of such orphaned heiresses in marriage, he felt that Sir John would regard his countenance of his suit as an ample reward for the part taken by his family in bringing about the king's restoration.

Harold, who for the last five years had suffered from continuous ill health, intended to make his home for the present at his sister's house, for Edith was his only near relative, and he dreaded the loneliness of his own Kentish mansion after she had gone to her far-distant home.

The journey had already occupied the best part of a week, and was a much more formidable undertaking than crossing the Atlantic now is, for the badness of the roads and the number of highwaymen who infested the country rendered a perfect cavalcade of servants and horses an absolute necessity.

From the spot where the coach stuck fast to the ruins of the abbey was barely a quarter of a mile; but the narrow path through the woods was so little trodden and the darkness was so great that even Rupert, familiar as he was with every tree and stone, found some little difficulty in guiding the party, which was obliged to proceed slowly on account of Clive. It was therefore quite twenty minutes after Madge's breathless entrance when the door was flung open a second time, and Rupert's voice called out cheerfully:—

"Here we are, grandmother; and wellnigh drowned. 'T is the heaviest rain I ever saw."

Mr. Staynor advanced cordially to welcome his guests, but his wife arose from her chair and made the strangers a dignified courtesy, such as

had been fashionable at court in her youth. Lady Elmer's garments were as wet as if she had been in the river, but she returned the courtesy with such a pretty air of deference and friendliness that her hostess came forward and began with her own hands to unfasten her dripping hood and cloak. As she was thus engaged, her attention was caught by Clive's white face and exhausted air, so bidding Madge take the lady to her chamber and find dry apparel for her, she herself led Harold into Rupert's tiny room and administered a cordial to him.

Her very kindness seemed to have a reviving effect on the boy. Before she left him his face had lost its deathlike pallor, and he begged her, with animation enough, not to give herself so much trouble for his sake. There was a look in his great dark eyes that seemed familiar to her. Really two or three years older than Rupert, he looked younger. His transparent skin, small hands, and even the shape of his face and the delicacy of his beautiful features gave to him an air of extreme youthfulness, which was one of the minor trials of his life.

Now he looked so young and so helpless that Mrs. Staynor involuntarily laid her hand caressingly on the soft hair that fell about his face.

The boy did not resent the action, though he was usually sensitive about such exhibitions of pity for his weakness, but taking her hand gently in his own he lifted it to his lips, saying, —

"Dear lady, you put me in mind of my mother."

"Is she dead?" asked the lady softly, thinking of her lost boys.

"Yes; she hath been dead for eight years come Christmas. My father died at Edgehill."

"Fighting under General Fairfax?" asked Mrs. Staynor with a darkening face.

"No; for our king. None of our house was ever amongst the rebels, madam," said the lad, with a flash of martial spirit lighting up his pale face.

"Then you are not an Elmer? I thought you were Sir John's brother."

"No, madam; I am Harold Clive of Brentworth."

"The son of Lady Isabelle Clive?"

"The same, madam. Lady Elmer is my sister."

"Yet she hath wedded one who hath been in arms against his king?"

"Yes, madam. At first the connection liked me ill enough; but since I have come to know John Elmer better, I am fain to allow that I am well contented with the match. He is a very noble and worthy person."

At this moment Rupert came to say that Madge was seeking Mrs. Staynor.

"What is to be done, mother?" she exclaimed.

"My Lady Elmer's gown is drenched with rain, and mine are all too small and not fit to be offered to so modish a lady."

Mrs. Staynor hesitated, then said :—

"I will find somewhat that she can make shift to wear. Fetch me the little key from the drawer in the press in my chamber, Margery."

A few minutes later she brought into Madge's bedroom a long trained gown of white satin, curiously embroidered with gold, and richly trimmed with the finest lace.

"My daughter tells me, Lady Elmer, that her garments are too small for you. I shall be pleased if you will do me the honor to put on this old gown of mine."

"O Mrs. Staynor, you are too good!" protested the young lady. "Pray lend me something simpler than that handsome gown."

"Do wear it," said Madge enthusiastically. "It was mother's wedding gown. It would like me well to see you in it. I am sure you would become it mightily. Let me be your waiting maid."

As she saw that they both really wished it, Edith put on the dress without more objection. It seemed to her very quaint and old-fashioned, for it had been made nearly forty years before; but to us it would not look more strange than the traveling dress which she had just taken off.

The skirt was a little long, for Lady Elmer was not much over middle height; but the shimmering satin and filmy lace set off the soft pink and white of her complexion. When Mrs. Staynor had last

worn the dress her neck and arms had sparkled with jewels; but Edith had no adornment save the golden-brown ringlets that clustered on her neck.

The old lady looked at the dress with eyes that had tears in them, for the long-laid-aside finery brought back painfully the memory of the days when she had worn it, a happy bride, and she turned away with a suppressed sigh.

Edith heard it; her soft brown eyes filled with tears, and holding out both hands to her hostess she said impulsively, "Dear Mrs. Staynor, let me put on my own gown again."

"No, no, my dear! 't is nothing," said Mrs. Staynor, kissing the sweet upturned face. "It is a wondrous pleasure to me to have my old gown used by my dear friend's daughter."

"Then you knew my mother?"

"Yes; I knew and loved her well when we were girls."

"Then I shall love you too, and I trust you will try to love me a little for my mother's sake," said Edith. "I am glad we are so near neighbors."

"So am I," cried Madge; "but now, if your ladyship is ready, be pleased to come to supper." Catching up the end of the long train, Madge followed her guest; so Lady Elmer made her entry into the quaint old hall in state. Her husband looked as if he scarcely recognized her; but

Clive, quite at his ease by this time, made her a low and courtly bow.

Every one was quite ready for Margery's hastily prepared supper, and to her satisfaction the travelers all did ample justice to it. They seemed to enjoy both the cold duck and the rye bread so much that she almost forgot the pewter and earthenware in which the meal was served. Sir John, like so many gentlemen of his time, took a keen interest in natural science, and as soon as supper was over Mr. Staynor took him to his turret, where they discoursed of chemicals and metals for two good hours.

In his late visit to London, Sir John had seen a good deal of the philosophers of the metropolis, and though he was at most times shy and quiet Mr. Staynor's strong interest in all he had to tell drew him on to talk much more than was usual with him.

In the meantime the party gathered round the fire in the room below was very merry. The old guitar was brought out, and Madge and Rupert sang several duets. Their voices were sweet and true, and their audience applauded them heartily. Lady Elmer also sang, but not so well as she talked; and by and by the guitar was put away while she told story after story of her continental adventures, or repeated the legends associated with many an old castle in France and Germany. With graceful tact she avoided all allusions to the

war; but by degrees the talk took a dark and tragic turn.

Till now Clive had been a silent though an appreciative listener to both songs and stories; but something in the conversation recalled to his mind a weird tale which he had heard in an old French inn. He told it well, with animated tones and expressive gestures. It was as follows:—

Hundreds of years ago, when Charlemagne was emperor, there lived a miser in the town of Verville. His house had walls full seven feet thick, and windows so narrow that they scarce let in the light, for within silver and gold lay in great heaps upon the floor. So fearful was he of being robbed that every night, after he had barred his doors, he drew his wealth together and slept upon the summit of the pile. Thus years went by and he grew thin and haggard and ancient. Nightly he lay upon his treasure, but slept little, always dreading lest it should be wrested from him. At length, for three nights in succession came a vision to disturb him. An old, grim, ghastly man, with eyes like burning fire, bent over him and laid a hand like ice upon his brow. "What wantest thou?" cried the trembling miser.

"Thy services," said the specter through its teeth. "I too hoarded up precious treasure all my earthly life; but it is lost to me, and now I beg thee to go forth and claim it for thyself."

"But," said the shivering miser, "I should thus risk all in leaving the fruit of my many years' labor unguarded."

"I will guard it for thee," cried the ghost. "Think ye that any man is bold enough to look a second time upon me when I have frowned upon him?" and he made a grimace so horrid that the miser pressed his hands upon his eyes.

"Thou shalt go on mine errand," continued the dread being sternly. "Even in life ill fared the monk who crossed my will, and thinkest thou I will brook contradiction now? If thou go not whither I bid thee, I will sup with thee at thy table; I will lie with thee on thy hard bed of gold; I will pursue thee waking and haunt thee sleeping. Oh, we will be right merry together, the miser and I!" and the demon laughed till the sound shook the stone walls to their foundations.

"Fair sir," said the trembling mortal, "I will trust my treasure to thy care. Whither must I wend my way?"

"Get you to the convent of Saint Étienne by the Rhone (once I was prior there), and beg admittance for the sake of charity. They will take you in, little guessing who sent you;" and again the demon's laugh rang long and loud to the echoing roof. "They drove me forth with bell and candle and book, because, forsooth, I guarded my hid treasure from all prying eyes; but thou canst enter."

"Craving your pardon, reverend sir," muttered the miser, "wherefore have you thus honored me? Methinks some young and valiant gallant were fitter to send on such a quest."

"Nay, not so! thou of all mortals lovest gold the best. I have known thee long for one who would give all for an ounce of the shining metal; therefore get thee gone, and say thou hast vowed to pass the night in humiliation and prayer before Saint Étienne's shrine. Ere daylight fades, mark well the saint's great tomb; it is of sculptured marble in the center of the church; then at the hour of midnight go stand beside it. At the first stroke of twelve utter these three words I shall whisper in thine ear. Hearest thou?"

"Yea, fair sir."

"Then guard well thy tongue. Spoken above thy breath they would shatter the stone about our ears, and turn thy gold to dust. Beware, I say again, how and when you speak them. Uttered at midnight beside yon tomb, they will crack open the marble from east to west. The church will rock about thee, but heed not. Within that tomb lie gold and gems to which this heap of thine is worthless dust. Gather them in haste, for the marble will close again at the last stroke of the clock, and woe betide thee an thou art still within! Keep up a firm, brave heart and thou wilt be the richest man in Christendom."

The miser smiled, and adjuring his awful guest

to guard his wealth as he had promised, he set forth upon his way.

Ere darkness fell he reached the convent, and through the still cold hours of the night he lay before Saint Étienne's shrine. Shaking and fearful, he at length drew near the tomb, and as the bell clanged forth the first stroke of twelve he uttered aloud the fateful words. A thunderous crash, a blinding light, and the marble parted wide from east to west! He stooped in breathless haste to gather the dazzling treasures from the tomb, while overhead rocked and trembled the great church as if it would every instant fall. Before half his task was done the eleventh stroke warned him that in a moment more the grinding marble would again crash together; he gained the pavement just in time. Again the thunder sounded; and thick darkness fell o'er church and tomb and glittering gems. The horror of his adventure turned his hair to snow, and when he gained his gloomy dwelling and found that hideous demon gloating over his gold, his reeling brain gave way, and in a frenzy of wild despair he shouted aloud the terrific words that had torn the tomb in twain. The shrieking specter fled, roof and walls crashed down, and the miser and his hard-won gold alike were dust!

"What a horrid tale!" cried Lady Elmer mer-

rily when Harold's voice ceased. "Where ever did you hear it?"

"An abbot haunts the ruins of our chapel yonder," said Madge. "He is always seen in the habit of a monk and is reputed to be the guardian of a rich treasure."

"Have you ever seen him, Mistress Margery?" asked Clive.

"No; because I have never invaded his domains at the times when he walks."

"Dame Goodyear, mother, hath told me positively that she hath seen him many a time."

"Dame Goodyear is a prating old woman, who believes any foolery that is taught her," said Rupert contemptuously. "Methinks the abbot would have better wit than to play so simple tricks, either dead or alive, as scaring of country folk for no imaginable purpose."

"Then," said Harold, "you do not believe that the spirits of the dead ever return to the world?"

"Nay, I say not that. I have heard some relations of ghosts and spirits, which very discreet and worthy persons pledged themselves to have seen with their own eyes. 'Tis only that I think there are many idle tales passed for truths on ignorant and unlearned folk."

"I," said Lady Elmer, "am thankful at the least that I have never seen such a being."

"I wonder how we should feel," said Madge, "if the abbot walked in here amongst us now."

By the way, Molly Goodyear says he hath been seen here ere now."

"Jest not, daughter," said Mrs. Staynor in a low tone, casting as she spoke a quick look over her shoulder into the dancing shadows of the recess. "*I have seen him.*"

Mrs. Staynor was imaginative and excitable, and she believed that she had seen the ghost, though her husband always assured her that the phantom had been created by her own fancy.

Lady Elmer involuntarily caught her brother's hand; that young gentleman himself turned pale; Madge's smile died away, and Rupert, taking up a great poker, began to stir the logs upon the hearth into a brighter blaze.

"I saw him once," Mrs. Staynor continued. "He came into my chamber the very night before the chapel was thrown down. He looked at me with sorrow and reproach, and then faded out of sight."

A dead silence followed; and if they had spoken their thoughts aloud, more than one of the company would have declared that they heard footsteps coming from the chapel, which was but a few yards away. Fortunately, just at that moment an unmistakable sound of footsteps was heard overhead, and a second later the squire and Sir John joined them.

Soon after, they separated for the night. Rupert was to have given up his room to Harold and

to have slept on a rug in the hall, but Clive protested so earnestly against this plan that at last they agreed to share the same bed. Rupert made the less objection, as he saw that their guest was still obviously discomforted by the conversation of the evening. Moreover, there was an old iron-studded door in the room, leading into the very ruined chapel which the abbot was said to haunt. It was always locked, but bolts and bars are a proverbially insufficient protection against such supernatural visitants.

The lads passed a restless night, though no one disturbed them. Rupert arose at the first faint streak of dawn, anxious to supplement their meager fare with a dish of fresh fish for breakfast; but Harold slept on till late.

Long before noon the travelers had set forth again on their journey, for the servants brought with them additional men and horses from Denham, with whose help the coach was soon drawn to firm ground and the wheel mended.

The parting between the Staynors and their unexpected guests was most friendly, and Lady Elmer pressed them all cordially to pay her a speedy visit at Cressley Castle, as their handsome modern mansion had been named.

CHAPTER IV.

LOST ON THE MOSS.

MADGE," said Rupert one stormy November day, "does it not seem strange how angry we felt at Sir John Elmer's coming before we knew him and his lady? and how sorry we shall be whenever they go up to London again!"

"Yes; we had few and poor divertisements before they came. Did Hal speak of their going to London when he was last here?"

"No. I think they are all not a little contented with their home here; but surely they will go some time soon."

"At times I wish we could go too. I am weary of this continuous round of sweeping and scrubbing and cooking, though oftentimes I am fain to admit that that latter task might be heavier with advantage to us all. Now, to-day, there is little for dinner, and nought at all for supper, save a loaf of this rye bread, which my mother likes so ill. There is not even butter; we ate the last at breakfast."

"You should have shown me this sooner, Madge; but, mayhap, even now, if I have good fortune, I may bring home somewhat tasty for

supper," said Rupert, rising and taking down his gun.

"Do not go, Rupert. There is a snowstorm brewing, I am sure."

"What if there be, Madge? it will not hurt me. But do not worry if I am not home in some hours. I may have a long tramp to find any game."

"What easy lives some folk have! I wonder much whether Sir John and Lady Elmer ever trouble themselves concerning our sad condition. Doth it not seem hard to you to go to Cressley Castle and see the very servants better lodged, better clad, and better fed than we, who ought to own a great part of Sir John's estate?"

"I don't know that, Madge. After all, when grandfather sold the land of his own free will, methinks it is less than fair to blame the purchaser, as if he had taken it by violence."

"You may be right, Ru; but the change in your opinion is something of the sharpest."

Rupert might have retorted that her opinion of the Elmers had changed as rapidly as his own, but he let her words pass in silence. He was busy with his powderflask and shot, and Madge suddenly slipped away without another word. As he left the ruins the girl came running after him, with her hair flying wildly in the wind.

"Rupert," she called, "Rupert, wait!"

The lad turned and went back to meet her, and she pushed into his hands a large share of the

rye loaf she had mentioned and a small slice of salt beef.

"Now, Margery dear," he said, "I could have made shift to do without it. I am fearful you have brought me more than mine own portion. Take back the half, Madge."

"Not a crumb!" cried Madge. "I will not carry it home again, so there! There is plenty for dinner, and I mean to trust you for supper; so good-by."

She stood on tiptoe to kiss his cheek, and he returned her salute with a pat on her head, saying:—

"You are the best 'tittle aunt in the world, Margery. Now run or you'll catch a great cold for your pains, and where should we be then?"

"You saucy boy!" she answered, laughing; "you ought to know better than to mock thus at your venerable relatives. Get you gone to your hunting, and beware not to tarry late."

Rupert waved his hand and walked briskly off through the woods, with his gun on his shoulder. There was nothing unusual in this expedition, though it rarely happened that it had to be determined on quite so suddenly. Madge had been housekeeper ever since their return to Denham Abbey, for Mrs. Staynor could not bring herself to accept thoroughly the altered conditions of her life, and her health was much impaired by the

sufferings which she had undergone. She could not bear to make even the occasional visits to the village which the supply of the family's necessities demanded; consequently Margery had taken upon herself the task of doing their little marketing, as well as most of the housework and cooking.

The whole family regarded Mrs. Staynor with the most earnest devotion. Her comfort and convenience were always the first consideration; indeed the great object of their lives was to soften the hardships of her lot.

Strange to say, Margery received more assistance in her household tasks from her father than her mother. Mr. Staynor was not so absorbed in his scientific experiments as to see nothing of what went on in the house, and many a time when Margery came home in haste from a ramble in the woods with Rupert, she found the cloth laid for supper and the meat or eggs frizzling on the fire. On washing days he carried the water for her from the river, and in times of extra work had even been known to sweep the floor or polish the furniture. In the summer time he did a little gardening, while Rupert, with a borrowed team, plowed up their narrow fields and sowed the oats and wheat which formed a scanty supply for the winter.

In November the more prosperous farmers near by were busy killing and salting their winter beef,

but the Staynors possessed only one single cow and were obliged to trust to Rupert's gun for meat during the greatest part of the year.

On this particular morning the lad walked several miles through the woods without seeing anything but a small partridge, which he shot as it rose from the ground. Unfortunately the bird fell into the underbrush, and he lost some time in finding it. He was disappointed at his ill success, and began to fear that the prospects for supper were poor.

The day was dark and cloudy and soon after noon a white mist began to rise. He sat down on a fallen tree by the edge of a field to eat his lunch, which after the morning's hard walking seemed a slender meal enough. He had scarcely finished when he saw a hare at a little distance. Rising cautiously, he took a shot and killed the creature. With this addition to his bag of game he decided to be satisfied and to turn his steps toward home. As nearly as he could reckon, he had come about six miles. The greater part of the way was through dense woods and he had not met a soul after leaving the village of Denham behind. To return by the road would add at least a couple of miles to the journey, so he determined to take a short cut through the woods and across a marshy tract of land where he hoped to come upon some wild ducks or snipe.

By the time he reached the common the mist

had thickened to a fog; he could scarcely see a yard before him. He gave up all hope of shooting any wild fowl, and slinging his gun from his shoulders he cut a stout pole from an ash near by and began to pick his way across the morass. He had not gone very far when he began to think that it would have been more prudent to return by the road, for the darkness increased every moment. Still he thought it scarcely worth while to return. By the aid of his pole he leaped from tuft to tuft, in constant peril of alighting in the black pools between. Here and there he came on a short piece of comparatively firm turf; then again the ground trembled beneath his feet. It seemed an interminable distance across the moss, and he feared that he had lost his way. Stories of men who had wandered round and round in such places recurred to his memory. Yet more fearful tales soon began to haunt him of unfortunate wretches lost like him, who had made a false step in the darkness and had sunk to a horrid death in the black ooze. Trembling at the appalling thought, he tried to keep his courage up by singing the songs he used to sing with Margery; but there seemed something incongruous between these light ditties and his terrible situation.

He still pressed forward, but he was very weary and the misty veil hid all but the next step from his view. Sometimes even that was hidden too; and, afraid to move, but even more afraid to stand

still, he was forced to leap in horrible uncertainty whether the next moment might not find him smothering and choking in some slimy pool.

Once he stood upon a mossy stone seeing nothing all around but cold mist and long reeds growing out of depths of shining water. Whither to turn next he knew not ; but while he hesitated he felt his resting place giving way beneath his feet. Ere it sank he had jumped and had lighted knee-deep in water ; but in fear and horror he struggled forward and gained at last a firmer foothold. An awful sense of loneliness was overcoming him. How long he had been by himself in that gray mist he could not tell. He rested a moment to gain strength and breath, and then once more pressed on. Scarcely knowing what he did, he began to sing the Twenty-third Psalm.

To his surprise, the tune was taken up by an answering voice close at hand, and in an ecstasy of joy he stopped singing and cried out, "Halloo, good master ! where are you ? I am bewildered in this bog and can scarce find standing ground, much less discover a way out of it !"

"Here am I, close beside thee, as I judge by the sound of thy voice," was the reply. "Have patience, friend, and I will make a light to guide thee."

"It needs not," cried Rupert. "Methinks I shall make shift to reach you, if you will but halloo to me once and again."

Without more ado the man began to sing again so loudly and heartily that Rupert could not mistake the direction of the sound. With this help he soon scrambled through the mire to the road that skirted the morass on this side. His new friend offered him his hand and said, "Thank God, young man, that he hath led thee safe out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay!"

Rupert bowed his head in silence, for he did indeed feel thankful for his escape from so horrible a death.

His companion evidently assumed that their roads lay in the same direction, for he walked on briskly, saying, "It is nigh on six of the clock, my friend; we have little time to spare, and I would not, for many a pound, be late to-night."

"Good sir, is this the way to Denham?"

"Ay; but Denham is ten good miles away!"

"Then I am all astray, and I fear Madge will have to do without my partridge for supper," said Rupert half to himself; but his companion stood still.

"I am under some mistake, friend," said he.

"What is thy name and degree?"

"My name is Rupert Staynor, fair sir, and from that you may perchance be able to guess my degree."

"And I mistook thee for one of the faithful," muttered his companion. "Thou art son doubtless of the malignant Staynor, whose wife pre-

sumed to imagine she could hold her house against the general of the armies of the Lord."

"I am his grandson, sir; therefore I beg that you will do him no dishonor in mine hearing."

"And thou art named after the German robber, art thou? Rupert, thou saidst, I think?"

"I am called after a most loyal and valiant gentleman, and I trust to bring no disgrace on the high name I bear."

"Ay, ay; it is ever the way with those of thy sort to glory in their shame."

"Sir," said Rupert, "will you have the goodness to put me in the way to Denham? I must not linger here."

"Young man, I meant not to hurt thee. Thou art not to blame for the folly of those who named thee. Thou art too weary to travel this night to Denham. Come now, do as I bid thee; but first give me thy word that thou wilt not use what I shall show thee to my hurt or to the hurt of any other."

"I will swear" —

"Nay, 'swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: neither by the earth; for it is his footstool.' Give me thy simple word, friend, and I will trust thee."

"On my word, then, I pledge myself to abuse no confidence which you shall think fit to repose in me."

"Then, young man, without further parley, I

am on my way to a small assembly of God's persecuted servants. If thou durst, thou mayest come with me, and I will give thee a bed afterwards; or, if it like thee better, I will put thee in the way of meeting one who will guide thee on thy road at the earliest dawn."

"Thanks, good sir. I will gladly accept your offer."

"But knowest thou that by so doing thou wilt risk the suffering of shame and imprisonment with the saints?"

"Yes; I know the penalty exacted for attending of such an assembly."

"Then let us make haste; we have still a good mile to travel."

They walked on in silence for some minutes, and then the Puritan inquired: "How camest thou, young man, to fall a-singing of one of the songs of Zion in thy distress?"

Rupert laughed:—

"Do you take me for a heathen, sir? I learnt that psalm at my mother's knee, and in my distress it gave me right good comfort."

His companion made no rejoinder, and Rupert said:—

"Sir, I have given you my name; pray tell me yours."

"Thou art something too curious, young man; yet, lest thou shouldest think I have aught to conceal, I am Obadiah Kenrick, shoe-

maker by trade, dwelling in the godly village of Horton, and sometime captain in the precious Colonel Cromwell's regiment, ere God raised him up to rule over these poor distraught kingdoms."

"Then you knew that usur—pardon me, I would say, the Lord Protector?" exclaimed Rupert with interest; for though he had heard much of the remarkable man in question, he had never before chanced to meet with one of his admirers.

"Ay; I had that glorious privilege. He was one amongst a thousand. Had God been pleased to spare him, Charles Stuart would never have dared to again set foot in this poor realm, with his crew of drunkards and blasphemers; but it hath happened according to the true proverb: 'The sow that was washed hath turned again to her wallowing in the mire.' Truly it is a righteous judgment upon us for our instability and our dissensions, when the hand of the Lord lay heavy upon us. Had we been at one amongst ourselves, the malignant would never have lifted up his head; but God sent strife amongst us; yea, he hath permitted his own to be smitten and trodden under foot of their enemies."

The earnestness and energy with which these words were spoken overawed Rupert, and not till the time for protestation was past did he remember that he had listened in silence to treasonable words against his king. Before he could frame a

suitable rebuke, his companion said in a different tone:—

“Here we are, at our journey’s end. Follow me closely, friend.”

The rugged path through the woods led down into a deep valley, at the bottom of which flowed a little brook. Here the trees were few and far between. On the opposite slope was a small old wooden barn. Beside it, some few paces distant, were the ruins of a cottage demolished during the war. Rupert was first made aware of these by stumbling over the stones which had formed the chimney; for, though the fog had lifted a little, the night was exceedingly dark.

A black figure stood at the door of the barn, but Obadiah Kenrick whispered a few words in his ear and Rupert was admitted without question.

Flaming torches fastened against the walls threw a wild light on the scene. Rude benches had been improvised by placing planks upon bricks and stones from the ruins near by, while a three-legged stool was set for the preacher, who had not yet arrived.

Rupert looked around with curiosity; but the darkness prevented his distinguishing much at first. He was surprised at the number of worshippers who had gathered in this lonely and inaccessible place. Amongst them were several women, whose cloaks and hoods bore unmistakable traces of a long pilgrimage through damp

fields and woods. He could not see the faces of many of the assembly, for Kenrick had chosen a position at the back ; but there was something in their very attitudes that suggested earnestness of character and solemnity of purpose. No one spoke above a whisper, and not a few seemed to be engaged in silent prayer or meditation.

His guide drew from his pocket a small well-worn book, bound in black leather, and, standing up so that the light from a torch above might fall upon the page, put on a pair of heavy-rimmed spectacles and began to read. While he was thus employed, Rupert looked at him more closely than he had hitherto found an opportunity of doing.

The shoemaker was a broad-shouldered, heavily built man of about middle height. His grizzled hair was not longer than men usually wear it nowadays. The square, broad forehead marked with deep upright lines, and the peculiarly small mouth, unconcealed by beard or moustache, with its thin lips and downward-tending corners, seemed to suggest sharpness of temper, while the squareness and heaviness of the jaws added the impression of intense obstinacy. Shaggy eyebrows and rather cold gray eyes did little to redeem the plainness of a face which to the young Cavalier seemed far from prepossessing ; something in its rugged fierceness indeed was so repulsive that he shrank away involuntarily, inwardly

resolving not to accept his hospitality for the night, if there were any means of avoiding it.

Presently there was a slight stir in the congregation as the minister entered with a companion whom he briefly introduced as a brother from America, who would presently address them. Then the service began with the singing of a psalm to a grand solemn old tune; and Rupert, who had never before heard so many persons join their voices in praise to God, felt carried away by the fervor and heartiness of the music. He too sang, all unconscious that the clear notes of his fresh young voice were drawing upon him the attention of his neighbors.

As the hymn ended, a man cloaked and muffled almost up to the eyes was admitted by the sentinel at the door; and Rupert fancied there was something familiar in his figure or gait.

Through the prayers, impressive as they were, the lad could not keep his eyes off the newcomer; yet in spite of this he listened as he was not wont to listen to the old curate in the little church at Denham. The strange accident that had led to his presence there, and the knowledge that all the worshipers were running the risk of imprisonment, gave to every word intense solemnity.

As the minister's companion rose to address the assembly, Rupert received another surprise. He was no other than the stranger who had spoken

to Madge and himself on the adventurous day when they made the acquaintance of the Elmers. Seen without the shabby cloak and slouched hat that had made them fancy him a highwayman, he had something noble and graceful in his appearance, though he was not exactly a handsome man. His features were too worn and sharp for beauty, his dark bright eyes were sunken, and his long hands were thin and transparent. His hair and beard (both closely trimmed), had once been black, but now were gray, and Rupert fancied that his age must lie between fifty and sixty.

He opened his Bible and read the last few verses of the eighth chapter of Romans. In deep, low tones he repeated: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Friends," he went on, "I am persuaded of this. Whatsoever God doeth, he doeth of infinite love. In love he giveth us sweet friends, joyous homes, and all good gifts of light and music and gladness. In love he sends privation and persecution upon us. In love he makes us scorned of the wicked and contemned of the proud. Nay, even in love he allows us to fall into divers temptations for the trying of our faith, which is more precious than silver. Friends and

brethren, persecuted, afflicted, tormented, your Lord allows you to partake of the fellowship of his sufferings, but 't is all in love, that you may grow up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Therefore be not grieved at your sorrows. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you. Only be ye stedfast. The Evil One walketh about seeking whom he may devour, and if we keep not close beside our Shepherd, we shall surely fall a prey unto that roaring lion. Yea, he will rend and tear them that loiter behind, looking back to the pleasures of sin from which they once have fled. Yet I would not drive you to walk uprightly; I had rather persuade you by the sweetness and graciousness of the Lord, by his cross and passion, by his undying love—to walk worthy of his name."

He spoke rapidly, with intense earnestness and eager gestures, in which grace was lost in overmastering passion. His energy rose to a painful intensity at times. "If there be any here," he cried, "who have not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious, oh, delay no longer! Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. If there be any here, still in arms against the Lord who bought them, oh, turn and repent before it is too late! Seek forgiveness now; to-morrow your sun may have set in endless night; oh, go not down

into the grave at enmity with the Almighty! provoke not his wrath upon you!"

Rupert listened trembling, for the agonized earnestness of the man affected him far more than anything in the words. He had not heard anything that he had not heard before, but never in his life hitherto had he thought, or cared to think, of his soul. His mother had taught him many a beautiful psalm and prayer, but she had never taught him to look for grace and life to the Saviour.

"Perhaps," continued the preacher, "ye think not that ye need a Saviour. You have no great crimes to answer for before the white throne of God, and you forget how many small spots blacken your soul in the sight of the Most Holy. Bethink yourself but a moment of the times without number when you have spoken bitter, impatient words, when you have given back blow for blow or returned railing for railing, when you have slurred over the truth or acted a lie, when you have been vain or selfish or timeserving. If you have done any of these things, you have broken the law and stand in danger of the judgment. Repent ye and come to the Saviour, who hath given himself for you; come, wash in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, put on the fair robe of Christ's righteousness, and enter into the inheritance prepared for the saints—glory and dominion forever!"

At last the preacher sat down, overpowered by his own earnestness, and after another psalm several of those present prayed aloud. Rupert hardly noticed what was said, so wrapped up was he in his own thoughts, till in a rather slow and hesitating voice the man shrouded in the cloak began to pray. He said only a few words, asking for faith and courage to be sent down upon them all, but the voice was that of the shy, diffident Sir John Elmer! As if to do his own part towards possessing the blessing he desired, he now permitted his cloak to drop, and sat boldly upright with his face uncovered.

Rupert had hardly time to wonder at seeing him in such a place, before Obadiah Kenrick began an earnest petition "for all the spiritual blessings we do so sorely need." His prayer was peculiarly comprehensive and beautiful, and Rupert was beginning to feel that he had wronged the man, when suddenly he was annoyed to hear that the old Puritan was praying for him. "Especially, dear Lord," he cried, "send down thy mercy on one who hath been this day in fearful peril. Snatch him, Lord, from the yet more fearful danger which surrounds him. Let him be plucked as a brand from the burning. Forbid it, O Saviour, that he should sink in the foul slough of sin and worldliness. Thou, O Father, who hast thus strangely guided him to-night into this little company of thy chosen servants, lead him

into thy kingdom. Thou knowest, O Lord, that the devil hath beset his path with many a snare, and hath blinded his eyes with the folly of youth, and the love of the world, but save him, we pray thee, good Master, for thine own sake and for the glory of thy great name."

A deep murmur of "Amen, Amen," echoed through the building, but Rupert felt very angry. "What right hath this canting hypocrite to make such a fool of me?" he asked himself; and when the meeting was dismissed he lingered to say to Obadiah, "Sir, how dare you thus entrap me to listen to your prating folly?"

"Dost thou mean how durst I pray for thee?" asked the old man calmly. "It is written that we are to pray for all men; wherefore shouldest thou be shut out?"

"But in this crowd! It likes me not, good sir, to have my case made so public."

"A time cometh, when the books shall be opened, and each man shall be judged by that which is written therein. Thy case will be public enough then, unless thou canst hide thyself in the Saviour. I charge thee to mortify this false pride of thine, and entreat the prayers of the faithful here present. Ay, for some, I tell thee, like holy Jacob, are princes with God."

At this moment the minister came forward, and offering him his hand said cordially, "I hope, my young friend, that you will join us again at our

meeting. Master Kenrick will give you all information concerning the times and places of our services."

Rupert muttered something inaudible, but could not refuse to take the good man's offered hand, lest he should be taken for a spy. The next moment Sir John recognized him and came to speak to him.

"How came you hither, Rupert?" he whispered.

"'Tis a long story, Sir John. I was hunting, and missing of my way, chanced here by a most strange accident."

"Will you then come home with me?"

"Gladly, Sir John, if my doing so would not prove inconvenient to you."

"Nay; I can well arrange it. Stay here for me till I return."

"I suppose that, having found a friend, thou wilt go hence with him," said Obadiah.

"Yes, good sir; though I thank you most sincerely for your kindness."

"If thou shouldest ever happen into the village of Horton, young man, thou wilt have a most cordial welcome, if thou wilt take bite or sup with me."

"Thank you, sir; I rarely go so far from home, but if I do pass, I will surely call at your house."

Sir John had been attended by a servant, who like himself was a secret adherent of the Independents, and he was very willing to spend the

night with one of his friends belonging to the congregation, so that Rupert could ride his horse.

It was nearly midnight when they reached Cressley Castle, and most of the household were in bed; but Lady Elmer had had supper prepared and was waiting for her husband in her own private parlor, a room filled with rich dainty furniture and precious ornaments. Surprised as she was to see Rupert, she gave him the warmest of welcomes; but he was painfully conscious of his shabby, mud-stained clothes and heavy boots, and for some minutes could do nothing but look at the richly dressed lady in shy wonder and admiration. Her full skirts of pale blue satin swept the ground, her short, low, pointed bodice was embroidered with pearls and laced up the front with gold; her puffed sleeves reached but to the elbow and were finished with ruffles of soft lace; jewels sparkled on her neck and arms, and ropes of glistening pearls were twisted in her curling hair.

Her husband's dress, though good and handsome, was very plain, and something in his grave face made Rupert fancy that his fair young wife's magnificence did not please him; but he answered her gay questions smilingly, and joined with her in kind attentions to their guest.

The tired and hungry boy was soon established at the table in a great elbow-chair while Lady Elmer poured for them steaming cups of a "new China drink called tee," and drew from Rupert

the story of his day's adventures. Her cheeks grew pale when she heard of his terrible peril in the marsh, and she murmured, "O Rupert, thank God you are spared from so horrid danger."

Harold, who had just entered the room, asked what she was speaking of and she repeated the story so graphically that Rupert felt himself again trembling with horror at the remembrance.

"It would be a pretty subject for a poem," cried Clive. "The mist, the gloom, the terror, the lost lonely wanderer, growing every moment more bewildered, and then the sweet answering echo to the holy psalm — safety, deliverance, and gladness!"

Rupert laughed; he could not help it. The incongruity between Clive's "sweet answering echo," and the gruff and rather nasal tones of the shoemaker was irresistibly comic.

"Methinks there is naught in the suggestion to move you to so great mirth," said the would-be poet rather stiffly.

"Nay, Hal," interposed Lady Elmer; "if Rupert can laugh over an adventure so horrid, sure we need not grudge him his divertimento."

"I crave your pardon, Harold," said Rupert. "Doubtless any sound that showed the neighborhood of solid earth would then have been sweet to me; but the good shoemaker hath little knowledge of tune or time, and a voice of the roughest, and methought that if you had chanced

to hear his strange music, it might have spoilt your poem."

"Few incidents," remarked Harold sententially, "are ready to the poet's hand. He ever needs to soften down incongruities and to add to them features suited to his art, to make a fair and striking poem."

"Well, young gentlemen," said Sir John, "it is after twelve of the clock, and with your good leave I will retire to rest."

"Rupert," said Lady Elmer, "take another cup of tea before you go. I drink it not often, but find it an excellent remedy when overwrought and wearied."

CHAPTER V.

MAKING OF POETRY.

WHETHER it was owing to the tea which he had drunk or to the excitement of the day, Rupert could not sleep. As he lay in his soft, luxurious bed, the horrible peril of those hours in the moss came back to him. As often as he began to lose consciousness, he fancied himself slipping down through the black ooze to death, and he woke in affright. By and by another thought rose to appall him. Supposing the mud had closed over him, was it true that his soul would also have been lost? Was he indeed in such fearful danger now? They had bade him come to the Saviour for pardon and peace; but how might that be done? He fiercely tried to shake off his disquietude. He tried to turn his mind from the thoughts of death and sin and judgment, but his will seemed powerless.

He felt himself alone, unsheltered, beneath the eye of the all-seeing God to whom his whole life had been an offense and a provocation. He could not utter one cry for mercy, for the God whom they had called loving seemed to him to be a stern and wrathful Lord of vengeance.

The long agony of that dark night far exceeded

the terrors of the preceding day ; but worn out at last he fell, toward morning, into a quiet sleep and when he awoke the memory of his wretchedness was like a dream.

The sun rose gayly, changing the somber world of yesterday into a region of soft light and beauty. The last brown leaves were fluttering gently down to join the rustling heaps upon the turf, while the frost-touched bracken covered the sweeping slopes of the hillsides with a bright cloak of golden brown, and the dark firs looked greener in contrast with the gray woods behind.

As Rupert threaded his way through the forest, he began to sing cheerily to himself, for his depression had passed away with the darkness. The game bag on his shoulder was well filled, for Lady Elmer had added to its contents a supply of dainties which would keep the frugal household at the abbey in luxury for a week. The gifts were so prettily offered that Rupert could not well refuse them ; but as he plodded on he wondered with some anxiety how they might be received.

He was barely in sight of the ruins when Madge came rushing to meet him.

"Well, Ru," she called, when she caught sight of the burden on his shoulder ; "you have had good sport, I see. Where is my supper that you promised me ? I am raging with hunger ; while as for father, if he has not eaten up all his old

metals, it will not be because he is not famished. No supper, no breakfast, and I was beginning to be frightened lest it should be no dinner either! Wherefore did you tarry so late, Ru?"

"Because, Madge, I had very ill sport."

"Ill sport, Ru? Your bag looks heavy."

"Ay; yet I took but one partridge and a hare. However, I chanced to meet with a lady who professed herself so mighty fond of hares that for mine she was ready to give this great store of beef and mutton, sweetmeats and cakes, fair wheaten bread, and I know not what besides."

"Then," said Madge, looking only half pleased, "you must have fallen in with Lady Elmer."

"Yes, Madge; and if I were you, I would not show too nicely the terms of the exchange, to grandmother at least. Methinks she will enjoy our gallant fare all the better if she knows not whence it comes."

"But, Rupert, how came you to go to Cressley when you knew how anxiously we were expecting of you? I thought nothing less than that some great ill had befallen you."

"Believe me, Margery dear, it was not mine own fault. I will give you the whole history of mine adventures (which were like to have proved something tragic); but first tell me truly, how fared you for supper?"

"In truth, we did well enough. A crust of

bread was left from dinner, and I had good store of milk and meal; so we both supped and breakfasted on gruel. Now to your tale."

"It will not take long to tell, though the play was overlengthy in the acting. In brief, 't is this: I wandered far, finding little, and the mist coming on, I essayed to cross Horton Moss for a short cut, and found too late that it was not to be safely attempted in a thick fog."

"O Rupert, how could you be so foolish! How durst you try to cross that horrid place when the mists were rising? I feared some evil had befallen you."

"I wandered there two hours or more, frightened each moment lest I should step into mud that would prove my death; but I never went in more than knee-deep. At last, to keep up mine heart, I began to sing (shouting had been vain waste of breath before) and my song was taken up by one upon the road, not many paces from me, though invisible. Now comes the strangest part of all my tale; but, Madge, before I tell it, promise never to repeat it to living soul."

"Wherefore, Rupert, must I make so strange a vow?"

"You will soon see, Margery. I dare not tell you unless you give me your word to keep silence."

"Well, I promise, Rupert. Make haste, for I must go to prepare our dinner."

"By my chancing to sing a psalm, the man who replied to me fancied me a Roundhead" —

"A Roundhead, Ru! Sure, his eyes must have been something of the blindest."

"You forget, Madge, neither of us could see the other for the mist and darkness. Well, he was on his way to a secret assembly of the Dissenters and he invited me to go with him. It was held in an old barn far from the road" —

"Then you did go!"

"Yes; I did go, and a most strange, curious scene it was. How so great number could get there in that foul weather was a thing to be admired. These Puritans are a mightily solemn, sober people; but who do you think made the sermon, Madge?"

"How can I guess, Ru? — the shoemaker?"

"No; that man who asked us concerning Dr. Blackwell the day we waited for Sir John's coach — him whom we took for a highwayman; and a good, able discourse it was, too."

"Well," said Madge thoughtfully, "I suppose that was how he came to favor a highwayman. They say the Nonconformist clergy have full as much need to fear the law as ever had common thief. But, Rupert, was it not foolhardiness on your part to adventure yourself amongst such a crew? Had any accident befallen, you might have been taken even for one of themselves."

"I knew it. The good shoemaker gave me

fair warning of the peril into which I ran. However, as it happened, no disturbance occurred. Besides the preacher, I saw there one whom I knew."

"Not Sir John Elmer?" cried Madge.

"Ay; even he. Methought he cared little to be seen. I think he was frightened lest there should be a spy in their midst, and I wonder not at it. Three months' imprisonment in the common jail would be no light punishment to one of his quality. I cannot but think it was something rash of Master Kenrick to carry me thither on my bare word that I would do them no ill."

"He knew that you were a gentleman," said Madge, proudly, "and that therefore your word might be trusted."

"His manners are of the freest. I doubt whether he hath more respect for men of birth and condition than for common folk. Ere we separated," he continued with a little hesitation, "he prayed aloud for me in public, that I might come to see my sins and errors and ask for Christ's forgiveness. I thought it uncalled for and impertinent from one like him, but when I taxed him with it he smiled with as great condescension as would become the king himself, and said he was bidden to pray for all—why should I be shut out?"

"The prating fool!" exclaimed Madge hastily.

"Nay, Madge; I do believe he meant it in all

kindness, and that he is right; sure, the prayers of no good man can do one hurt."

"They have made you half a Roundhead already," said the girl contemptuously. "I trust you will not betake yourself to their canting, psalm-singing ways. Naught to my mind is more detestable than a hypocrite!"

"Nor to mine, Margery; but give me leave to say it becomes you not to go so far and so fast. What have I done that you should use so vile a word to me?"

"Nay, Rupert," she replied, laughing; "wherefore mount so high a horse for such slight occasion? If I had been a man, I suppose you would have bidden me draw and defend myself!"

"You are excessively provoking at times, Madge."

"I like to provoke you, Rupert. It is full as good as a play to see you angered. But jesting aside, last night I lay awake till dawn thinking first of you and next of the woeful condition of our affairs. You had hardly set out yesterday when a letter came by special messenger from Lawyer Cloudsby pressing for instant payment of that great debt that hath so long plagued and harassed us. Father put him off till the rent should be due from George Sanson, and gave him a writing promising to pay in full the forty pounds from him directly it was received. How we shall contrive I know not. That money is our

entire living for more than half the year, and yet it will scarcely satisfy a fifth of Cloudsby's claim. I see naught before us but starvation, Ru. Oh, it is hard ! ”

“ How did grandmother take it ? ”

“ She wept a little ; but father comforted her, speaking so cheerily that she soon believed all would be well, or at the least professed to think so. Father says God will take care of us, because he loves us ; but, O Ru ! to me God seems so far away that it is vain to ask his help. He hath allowed so great evil to befall us already that I cannot think it really troubles him, as father says, to see us in want of bare necessities.”

“ Once, years ago, I said some such thing to grandfather, Madge, and for answer he told the story of the three children in the furnace. Do you remember it ? How, though God permitted them to be cast in a furnace heated seven times above its wont, he walked there with them himself, cheering their hearts with sweet discourse and permitting no hurt to come upon them. It seems to me that grandfather himself passes thus through all afflictions, untouched in the midst of so horrid calamities as rarely fall to the lot of one man.”

“ Father is as true a saint as any out of heaven,” murmured Madge ; “ but it grieveth me the more for that to see him trodden down and

despised in his old age. He, at least, doth not deserve the evil that hath overtaken us."

"The preacher last night, Madge, said God sends all in love, and so says grandfather."

"Ah, well, I pretend not to understand it; such things are too hard and difficult for me. 'Tis all I can do just to live through them as I may; but, Ru, if something cannot be procured, I doubt but father will spend his Christmas in the jail."

Impatiently dashing away the tears from her eyes, Madge hurried away and was soon singing at her work as if she were the gayest of the gay.

Strange to say, the whole party were in peculiarly good spirits at dinner time, when they met at the table supplied by Lady Elmer's bounty. Squire Staynor was cheerful because he had been able to make some kind of settlement with Lawyer Cloudsby, though it was one that only put off the evil day; Mrs. Staynor felt better in health than usual, and was glad to see the others happy; while Madge and Rupert were rejoicing in a project to restore the ruined fortunes of the family which they had hatched while dinner was getting ready.

It was a very nice dinner, too, and when people are accustomed to live chiefly on porridge and rye bread, sweet, white bread and a tender roast of beef are not things to be despised. To crown the feast, Madge had made a small pot of coffee,

and as they sat sipping it round the fire no one would have guessed from their faces that they had just received a severe blow.

Mr. and Mrs. Staynor and Rupert were still sitting by the fire cracking hazelnuts, and Madge was busy putting away the dinner things, when the clatter of hoofs sounded on the paving stones of the old courtyard, and Harold Clive, mounted on a handsome and spirited black horse, rode up to the door. He tied the animal to a ring in the wall and made his way without ceremony into the kitchen, where Madge was washing her dishes. Perching himself on the top of a meal cask, he asked:—

“Is Rupert at home, Mistress Margery?”

“Yes; he is in the sitting room, Mr. Clive. Mother and father are there too.”

“Then do be so good as to beg him to come out here. I have something to ask him that I cannot talk of before Mr. and Mrs. Staynor.”

“Some mischief,” asked Madge, “that you want Rupert to help in?”

“I give you my word, no, Mistress Madge,” said Harold good-humoredly. “You should listen to every word of it, only I like not to be laughed at!”

“I am sadly in need of a little divertisement,” sighed Madge. “Why should you mind my laughing? I have always heard it does one so much good!”

"Then I must be a godsend to you. You are ever laughing at me, though I am fain to confess that I cannot always see what you find so diverting, Mistress Madge."

Mistress Madge's bright eyes were dancing with fun and mischief even now ; but making an effort to control herself, she went to call Rupert. "I cannot think what he wants, Ru ; he is so important and mysterious."

"Now, Mr. Clive," she said, when she returned to the kitchen, "do you really mean to tell me that my presence here distastes you?"

Clive made a low bow, and declared that Mistress Margery's presence could never be aught but acceptable to him.

Margery responded with a sweeping courtesy, exclaiming, "Now, Mr. Clive, in plain English, without compliment or vanity, must I go or stay?"

"Stay, if you please, Mistress Madge. The fact is, Rupert, I have begun to write the poem I told you of, but I find your relation might have been fuller with advantage, mine own experience of such adventures being truly limited."

"Oh, do read it to us!" said Madge ; "I love poetry. Rupert, your name is in the way to become immortal!"

"Now, Mistress Madge, you promised not to laugh."

"I am most grave and serious, fair sir. The honor done to our family will"—

"A truce to your fooleries, Madge!" said Rupert, seeing that the young poet began to look offended. "Now, Harold, we are ready to listen."

"But, Rupert, the poem is not ready to read. I have barely written scraps of it. I was not sure from your description whether the mist came on before or after you set forth across the marsh."

"To say truth it was thick enough when I started, but it grew darker afterwards, so that I could not see a yard around me."

"Then, also, how large are the pools you spoke of, and do you sink fast or slowly through the mud?"

"Most of the pools are small, and as for the sinking, I stayed not to try. I have heard, though, that it is a slow death and most agonizing; but, Harold, you could get a better notion of all these things on the very spot. If it like you, I will guide you thither in daylight, and show you how and where I crossed as far as maybe."

"Nay, Rupert; I could not ask you to take that danger a second time."

"There is little danger, in a fair light, to one who knows the country," said Rupert. "Come; the walk would do you good!"

"Perhaps," suggested Madge, narrowly watching Clive's face, "Mr. Harold cares not to adventure himself into such peril. I am sure I blame him not! You are too foolhardy, Rupert."

It was true enough, but the young man's cheek flushed painfully, for Madge's words sounded like a taunt, and in that age courage was regarded by many people as the chief of the virtues.

Rupert, by way of covering the awkwardness of Margery's remarks, begged Clive to read what he had written, and after some hesitation he complied. The opening lines contained a description of the mist "lying low o'er all the treacherous moss," and were really very pretty. The rest of the poem was so fragmentary that little could be made of it, but Madge, anxious to make amends for her careless speeches, praised it all warmly.

Clive was much pleased and talked eagerly of the great men he had seen in London, and of his hopes of "doing something worth, by and by."

"Harold," said Rupert suddenly, "do you remember the story you told us of the miser and the ghost? Why not write that in verse?"

"It is too old. I want something fresh from life, not books."

"How would it like you, Mr. Clive, to play a part in such a drama?" asked Madge with a mischievous glance. "Shall we tell him, Rupert?"

"It will be his turn to laugh if we do!"

"Then by all means tell me," exclaimed Harold. "Trust me to keep a secret."

"It is a secret," said Madge. "Well, you must know there is a story in this very house of a haunting spirit, guarding of hidden treasure. We

know the spot, marked by tradition as a grave, where is rich store of gold and gems. Oh, if only it might prove true !”

“What do you intend to do ?” asked Clive, sinking his voice to a whisper.

“We mean to seek for the treasure, and try to mend the ill fortunes of our house, which are sunk to that ebb we scarcely know how we are to live through the winter.”

“But dare you brave the wrath of the guardian of the treasure ?” asked Clive.

“I believe I dare,” said Rupert ; while Margery exclaimed, “I do not promise not to be frightened if the ghost appears, but at least I’ll endeavor not to run away. ’Tis one comfort, I never heard of a ghost really doing any one serious hurt, after all.”

“Do you believe in ghosts at all, Mistress Margery ?”

“I know not whether to believe or no. My mother, as you have heard, says she has seen the abbot, but father would have told us it was only an hallucination, caused by an overwrought brain ; and I have heard that many of the wisest and most learned men say the same.”

“Whether that be so or not, the money is ours of right,” remarked Rupert. “The abbot was so notorious an evildoer that the whole neighborhood rang with his crimes, and this very money hidden away so carefully was obtained by fraud from an ancestor of ours. If we can find it, ’t is ours ;

therefore we shall be but doing of our duty, and no ill can come upon us save God sends it."

"When shall you endeavor it?" asked Clive.

"Towards midnight, next Thursday or Friday. The moon will then be at the full, and grandfather will go earlier to bed; for the most part of moonless nights he passes in watching of the stars from the turret above. Moreover we should need light to work by."

"Will you take me for a partner in your enterprise?" said Clive earnestly. "I could help a little at least."

Madge said nothing, but Rupert answered quickly, "Surely, we would be glad of your assistance, if you care to give it."

"Then you can make some more handsome poetry concerning the adventure," said Madge, "especially if we should chance to see the ghost."

"Hush! it is ill jesting where we know so little, Mistress Margery!" said Clive with a quick glance towards the gloomy stone passage that led to the chapel.

"Ah, Mr. Harold, you are the first person I ever saw who was frightened at the mention of a ghost in broad daylight!"

At that instant Mrs. Staynor's voice was heard calling "Margery!" and the girl hurried off to see what was wanted.

"Rupert!" said Clive mysteriously, "I had another purpose in coming hither besides the

poem. It is to give you a warning. John sent me to say that they have found that the barn is being watched and it was only the badness of the night that saved you last night ; so go not thither again. Samuel brought the news this morning."

"Thank you, Harold. I will take heed. Here comes Madge again."

"Mr. Clive, mother says, Will you come into the parlor?"

"I must not stay many minutes, then, for it is time I was going home!"

Before his departure, Clive contrived to ask Squire Staynor's opinion upon the question of supernatural appearances, and was relieved to hear that he was quite disinclined to believe in the many marvelous tales which then passed from mouth to mouth. His scientific studies had shown him that many appearances, terrifying to the superstitious and ill-educated, might be traced to natural causes, whilst an immense proportion of such stories was either entirely fictitious or was founded on facts, distorted by the imagination of the narrator. Indeed, Mr. Staynor's views did not differ widely from those held by the educated classes in our own day.

Harold, being of a nervous and imaginative temperament, had passed many intensely uncomfortable hours during his life from dread of the supernatural. His education had been of a somewhat superficial character, better suited to make

him an accomplished gentleman than to develop his reasoning powers or to strengthen his mind. If he could, he would gladly have broken free from the superstition that tortured and shamed him. But he needed far stronger aid than was to be obtained from Mr. Staynor's calm assurances of the absence of proofs of supernatural appearances, though the squire made a great effort to show him the falseness of his position, and Clive himself really thought at first that he had succeeded. He was no sooner on his way home through the dusky woods, however, than his nerves were quivering as usual with almost equal dread of highway robbers and specters. It really seemed as if he were hardly the best person to undertake the task of assisting to rob a ghost-guarded grave.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE.

RUPERT," said Madge, two or three days later, "I think Harold Clive is something of a coward. He quakes whenever the abbot's grave is mentioned."

"Why do you keep speaking of it, then?"

"To say truth, I do not much mind if I do disgust him about it. I think we should do better without him. His sudden starts and the way he has of looking as if he sees something awful in the distance upset my courage horribly. If he shrieks or faints, I will not answer for it that I shall not run away, Ru, and leave you to meet the abbot alone."

"I wish you would cease jesting on the subject, Madge. Leave poor Clive alone. Grandfather says it is his want of bodily strength that makes him so easily frightened. It is cruel to lead him such a life for what he cannot help."

"Well, Ru, I am glad you are of a different mold. I hate such a weak craven spirit in either man or woman. I do think there is good hope that you may live up to your noble name."

Rupert smiled, but said gently, "I am so strong,

Margery. It is very different which poor Harold. Nevertheless, I deny not that there is nothing would give me more signal satisfaction than to win the respect of the world for bravery, like my glorious namesake. But, O Madge, it is beyond all expectation. I shall never have the chance of proving whether I be brave or not."

"Strange that Prince Rupert in all his battles hath received no serious hurt," said Madge. "I should have thought that one like him, so noble and so heroic, would be in a double danger in every fight; for surely the Roundheads would gladly have slain our dreaded prince if they could."

"Ay; they used to say that he had protection from the evil one, so little can they understand his high courage and noble contempt of danger."

"Mayhap it was to excuse themselves, when they fell a-pieces before his fiery onslaught."

"Very likely; but it seems to me, Madge, it would need even stronger courage to stand firm and wait the onset of a foe like Prince Rupert than to follow him in his headlong charge. I wonder if Master Kenrick ever met him thus? I should like to hear him tell of it, though I doubt he would use ill words enough concerning our valiant leaders. My very name was the text for a discourse that savored of treason."

"Rupert, how could you find patience to talk with him? I thought nothing would induce you

to listen to spiteful and malicious words against your godfather. Sure he honored you enough in giving you his own name to make you ever more his faithful servant."

"It would please me above measure to see the prince," said Rupert. "I wonder if we ever shall."

"Mother says he is most noble and comely in person, and of a tallness far above common men. I would rather see him than his majesty himself."

Rupert had been busy for a great part of the week, preparing for the task which they proposed to undertake on Thursday night. Under pretext of needing the stones to improve the shelter for the cow, he had removed a large quantity of the broken fragments of the wall from the corner of the chapel where the treasure was traditionally stated to have been deposited, and he at last uncovered a huge flat stone.

He called Madge out, saying, "Look here! I have come to the grave at last, and happily the stone is so cracked and broken that I am sure we can move it readily enough when the time comes. It looks as if there had been a fire on it."

"Doubtless it was the sacrilegious Roundheads," said Margery. "Don't you remember how they burnt all the furniture and broke up the holy table?"

"Well, I am sure I can move it now, even if I have them to thank for it," remarked Rupert. "Has Harold come yet?"

"No ; nor I scarcely expect him either," replied Margery.

"Hark ! there is the sound of his horsehoofs even now."

With one impulse they ran out into the courtyard to meet the advancing horseman ; but after a single glance the girl fled in uncomfortable consciousness of her coarse dress and huge apron, both liberally adorned with white patches, for, excellent cook as she was, Margery never seemed to get full control of her flour.

If it had been Clive, she would have stood her ground to receive his laughing and somewhat satirical compliments on her beautifully wintry appearance, and to tease him in return about his last new idea for a poem ; but Madge did not care to be seen by a stranger in her old dress ; so while Rupert went forward to see who or what was wanted she hurried back to the kitchen.

There from a loophole in the thick wall she watched the pair outside with the interest natural to one who lives a secluded life. Her curiosity was all the greater because from the beauty of the stranger's horse and from the handsomeness of his dress and appointments she judged him to be a man of wealth and consequence. He wore a suit of dark blue cloth, large riding-boots reaching far above the knee, and a short cloak richly lined with velvet. A black beaver hat, adorned with several dark plumes, a broad

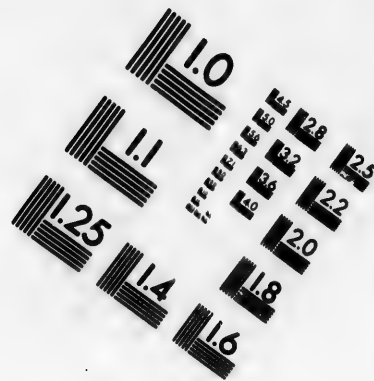
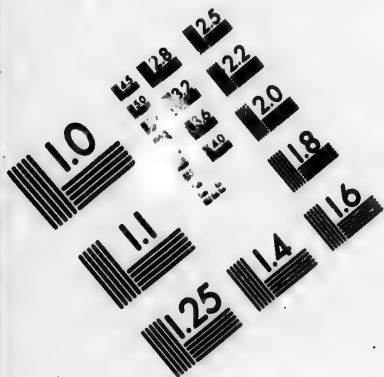
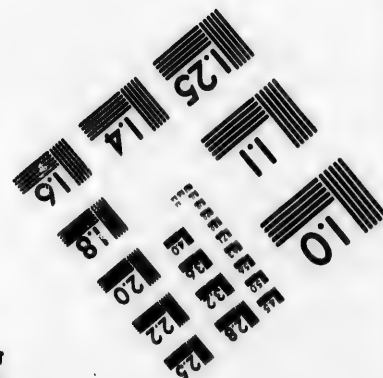
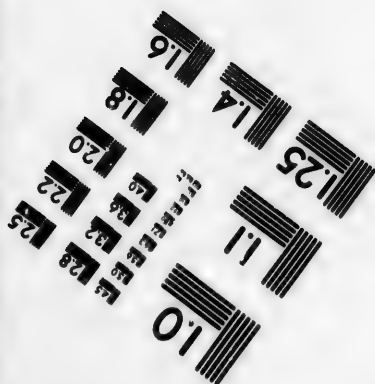
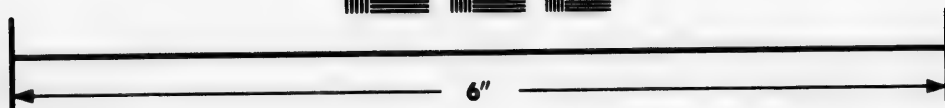
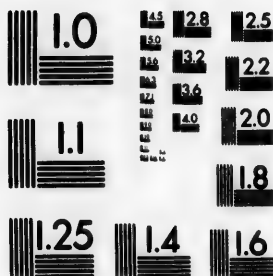


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lace collar, and a handsome sword completed his attire.

Rupert stood talking to the gentleman with his cap in his hand. Anxious to get a nearer view of him, Madge ran into the chapel, and, peeping through the broken arch of one of its windows, was near enough to see well, if only the stranger would turn round; but, alas! he kept the back of his long curled periwig towards her. Presently he dismounted, and then Madge saw him perfectly.

A figure of remarkable height but well proportioned, deeply bronzed skin, dark eyes, well-arched, strongly marked eyebrows, a resolute mouth, and a firm chin gave to the traveler a rather stern and forbidding air. Yet as he spoke to Rupert he smiled kindly enough, and a dimple came and went on his cheek.

Presently they began to walk towards the house, and Madge, thinking that Mrs. Staynor might not like to be surprised by this courtly gentleman in her humble morning attire, hurried in to give her warning.

"Madge, child! what hath happened?" exclaimed the lady as her daughter appeared at the parlor door with red cheeks and hair absolutely standing on end with being exposed to the roughness of the December breeze.

"It is only," gasped Madge breathlessly, "that a gentleman hath ridden up, and Ru is bringing him in, and I thought that mayhap you would like

me to help you to change your gown; he may be a messenger from his majesty—oh, would n't it be joyful? I have never seen a richer habit. Do come, mother!"

"Have patience, daughter. I should think this dress"—

"O mother, do make haste! I would not have so fine a gentleman see you in this old stuff gown for the world. I hear them at the door. Put on the lovely robe you lent to my Lady Elmer."

"That gown, Margery, is as little suited to the occasion as to my age. The gentleman, if he be indeed courtly and well-bred, would be fain to smile at my folly and vanity in so bedizening of myself."

"Well, mother, what can you do? Your old black gown will look dingy beside this gentleman's cloth and velvet!"

"Child, we have little cause to be ashamed of our poverty. Fetch me the black gown to my chamber, and then change your own, if you think fit. I need not your aid."

Nevertheless Madge stayed to dress her mother's hair and fasten her gown before she smoothed her own hair and dressed herself in a skirt and bodice of flowered silk trimmed with gold lace that had been given her by Lady Elmer. It was very handsome, and its yellow shade set off her dark hair and complexion; but Madge felt uncomfort-

ably conspicuous in it, she was so unused to wearing anything new or pretty.

Rupert knocked at her door just as she finished dressing. "That is right, Madge!" he exclaimed, "you have done well to put on your braveries. Turn round and let me see you!"

"Who is it, Ru? Quick! Is it a messenger from the king?"

"Not exactly," said the boy; "but you might have made a worse guess, mine aunt."

"Rupert, tell me! or I shall go right into the room and hear for myself!"

"Well, then, Madge, it is Prince Rupert!"

"O Ru! what made you keep me waiting so long? Prince Rupert! I had rather see him than the king himself, I do believe! But are you sure he hath no message from his majesty?"

"No; for he came hither straight from Chester. He chanced to hear there that grandfather had come back to live here, and he hath turned ten miles out of his way to visit us."

"Father hath done more than that to serve him and his!" said Margery dryly.

"Nay, Madge, blame not the prince for what he hath no power to prevent. Both grandfather and he fought for the king's sake only. Prince Rupert hath gained little but slander and reproach by all that he hath done."

"Doth he not seem to you older and graver, Rupert, than you thought he would be?"

"I know not, Madge. He is most noble and courteous, in spite of his stern looks. Come and see him. He said he had not time to tarry long."

Strange to say, when Madge made her courtesy to the hero of her childhood, her courage entirely left her, and it was not till she was seated in a distant corner of the room that she could either look at or listen to him. His royal blood and the stories she had heard of his impetuous courage so impressed her imagination that she felt quite overcome with the honor done to them all by this friendly visit. When she recovered her composure, the prince was talking to Mrs. Staynor of her memorable defense of the house against Fairfax.

"It grieved me sorely, madam," he said, "to see the sad condition of your noble house. I had no idea that those rascally Roundheads had done it so much hurt. I am almost fain to wish that you had condescended to make terms for surrender in the first place, though if every stronghold had been held as boldly and faithfully for his late majesty, he would never have come to such an evil fate."

"Your highness is most kind to say so," said Mrs. Staynor, a bright flush coloring her pale cheeks. "God forbid that I should have let any selfish considerations of our own ease or wealth stand in the way of our duty to the king! If it were to be done again, I trust I should be as ready

to hold the place to the last, despite of knowing to the full the malice and cruelty of our enemies."

"Madam, if I could serve you with the king, I would most gladly do so; but mine interest with him is small; yet—pardon my intruding of advice upon you unasked—it may be that did his majesty know how ill-requited your signal loyalty hath been, he would endeavor to see that you had justice."

"Hitherto," said the calm voice of the old squire, "little hath come of mine addresses to the king. Probably they have never reached his majesty's eyes; but I have no means of bringing them before him. I deny not that at this moment my debts are of so great magnitude that I daily fear that I shall be arrested by one creditor or another!"

"It is a crying shame, good sir. Write out for me a memorial of your case, setting forth as plainly as may be the condition of your affairs. For mine own particular, I promise to deliver it into the king's own hands, and to add to it such persuasions to have justice done as I can. It is, perchance, worth attempting, but I would remind you once again that the king hath other advisers than I, and more like than not it may come to naught."

The prince spoke a little impatiently, as if his monarch's ways were not always to his mind.

Mrs. Staynor would have kissed his highness'

hand in her gratitude, had he permitted her, while the squire could scarcely find words to express his thanks. Rupert and Madge, forgetting their awe, pressed forward and added their eager thanks in such an incoherent style that the prince laughed good-humoredly, and patted their heads in a fashion that, as Madge said afterward, "made them feel about two years old."

"Good friends," said the prince, when the excitement had subsided sufficiently to give him a chance to speak, "I fear you hope too much from what I have said. I will do all I can, but I must warn you once more that that is very little. I am no court gallant, and my desires have small weight with his majesty."

"About preparing of this memorial, your highness," said Squire Staynor; "I fear it is a matter scarcely to be accomplished in a moment, and if your highness does not presently intend to leave these parts, perchance we had better write it at greater leisure, and send it on to you, wherever you shall be pleased to appoint."

"To-night, good sir, I lie at my Lord Manton's house, and to-morrow at Altrincham, at The Royal Oak. Can you make shift to send to either place? I shall set forth from Altrincham betimes in the morning, all being well, the ways are now so bad and darkness cometh on so early. If my godson here is to bear your errand, let him come and inquire for me at the inn, to-morrow evening,

if possible. Then he can rest there for the night and return by daylight."

"I thank your highness. It shall be done as you direct. But now will you condescend to visit my poor elaboratory, little as I have to show you? I know how great interest your highness takes in all scientific experiments, and I would fain learn somewhat of you concerning the properties of certain minerals of which I possess samples, if your highness will stoop to play the teacher for my benefit."

"You do me too much honor, learned sir. I cannot hope to teach so curious and ingenious a gentleman aught that it imports him to know, but will gladly sit at his feet to learn what I may."

So saying, Prince Rupert rose and followed his old host up the winding turret stair to the little circular chamber where the squire spent so much of his time.

"I hope your highness will be pleased to excuse the sad condition of the place," said the old man, as he threw back the shutter from a narrow window to the south, and let in a stream of sunlight upon a rickety table loaded with heaps of ore, strange-shaped jars, and dusty books. A small forge stood in one corner, and a pair of bellows lay on the floor among a litter of chips and shavings; tools of all sorts hung in a rack on the wall, which was further adorned with three or four shelves containing the skulls and bones of various

small animals ; and stuffed birds, dried snake-skins, and preserved frogs and toads filled every available space.

"My daughter Margery hath more than once offered to reduce my sanctum to order," continued the old philosopher, with a smile, "but I feared that it might be an experiment more fatal in its results than anything I have hitherto attempted."

"I can well believe it, sir," replied the prince. "The too-adventurous hand of one unskilled in science may destroy the work of years. Mine own elaboratory is, I fear, in little better order, but I have forbid the maids to bring mop or broom within it."

By this time the squire had cleared an old arm-chair and begged the prince to be seated, himself remaining standing in respect to his royal guest, until Rupert desired him to sit down. An hour of conversation ensued, in which Richard Staynor entirely forgot the prince in the votary of science, for, strange to say, the man whose name is best known for his dashing courage and brilliant charges had spent long hours in the patient toil of the inventor. Led on by his host's eager curiosity, he talked with the frankness of a soldier of his improved gunlocks and gunpowder, and of the hydraulic machines upon which he was then at work, but he listened with equal interest when the old man began to detail the results of some of his own painstaking experiments.

"I have heard that your highness is even as great a draughtsman as a soldier and an inventor," said the squire; "and a friend of mine, one Mr. Archer, wrote me word how you had condescended to explain to him your invention of mezzotinto. I have ever had great interest in such arts, though I cannot draw a straight line myself, and should be much honored if your highness would be good enough to make plain to me one or two small points on which the letter was not clear."

By the time that the prince had made the required explanations it was long past noon, and he rose to depart; but when they went downstairs, they found that dinner had been prepared, and his highness, who was in truth hungry enough, readily consented to remain.

Madge and Rupert prepared to wait on their noble guest, but he would have all sit down together. Happily Rupert's hunting had been unusually successful on the previous day, so that "the fare was handsomer than the dishes it was served in," as Mrs. Staynor had remarked. Even the obnoxious rye bread was replaced by a wheaten loaf, which Rupert had walked two miles to procure while his grandmother and Madge were broiling the fish and roasting the fowls.

To the unqualified satisfaction of his entertainers, the prince's appetite was by no means destroyed by the fact that his plate was pewter. He made an excellent meal, talking easily and pleas-

antly of his many strange adventures by land and sea. As he listened, Rupert's admiration for his godfather increased, and he became more determined than ever to seek wealth and glory on the sea.

The short wintry afternoon was drawing to its close when the prince at last bade his hospitable entertainers farewell and rode away through the woods towards Denham, where he had commanded his servants to meet him. Then Rupert built up a great fire, Madge brought in a candle, and Mr. Staynor sat down to prepare his memorial to the king.

The room was very silent, for they were all painfully impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. Not a word had been uttered for an hour, when a sudden rap at the door broke the stillness. Rupert went to open it, and Harold's voice sounded in the distance, so Madge slipped out into the kitchen to join them.

Clive had already taken his seat upon his favorite flour barrel, but Rupert was employed in drawing together the dying embers on the hearth and trying to coax them into a flame with tempting splinters of pine. Madge was perched on a log within the wide chimney, and began :—

"Well, Mr. Clive, have you come to help us dig out the abbot to-night?"

"Yes," said Clive boldly; "I have put my horse in the stable and I am ready. I could not

get away sooner. My sister had company and they have only just set out for home. I came to the crossroads with them."

"I wondered if you had come alone," remarked Madge. "Did you see anything of the abbot as you came through the chapel?"

"Clive," said Rupert, "we have had no less a visitor than the prince to-day. I know not whether that will not upset our plans for this night."

"The prince? What prince?"

"Prince Rupert. Oh, he is a most valiant and gallant gentleman, and strangely curious and learned withal. He seems to know more of metals than my father, and can ply a black lead pen as nobly and handsomely as a sword."

"I met him once in London, Rupert, on the Mall. They say he is the best tennis p'ayer in all England, but he careth little for the court gayeties and fooleries, and liveth much apart and secluded."

"I think the better of him for it," cried Rupert, whose experience on the matter in question was singularly small. "A round of feasting and dancing and merrymaking is no life for a soldier."

"So John says now and again; but Edith and I think no harm of taking what divertissements we can out of life. It is a sad and sorry business at the best."

"You should save that for your poetry, Mr. Clive."

"Nay, Mistress Margery; I care not to write down my wretchedness!"

"Why not? I believe it would do you good. They say that there is nothing like hard work for driving away sorrow, and sure nothing can be much harder, to my thinking, than finding and fitting together a score of rhymes."

Clive gave her a glance that spoke volumes of contempt for such ignoble ideas about the beautiful art of poetry, but he did not deign to answer her in words.

"Shall you give up your project altogether, Rupert?" he said, after a pause.

"No; but to-morrow I shall have to walk to Altrincham to carry a paper from my grandfather to the prince."

"To Altrincham, Rupert? That must be five-and-twenty miles."

"Yes; so I must be on my way by daybreak."

"Nonsense, Rupert! I will walk home and you shall ride Navarre. I have been out so little lately the poor beast is just longing for a good stretch across country."

Rupert's eyes sparkled and he exclaimed:—

"O Harold, how kind you are! Are you certain you will not need Navarre? I am not to return till Saturday."

"Rupert, you will break your neck or Navarre's

legs!" said Margery. "I don't believe you know how to manage a horse any more than a ship! He'll run away, Mr. Clive, and you'll never see either him or Ru again!"

"I am not frightened for Rupert, Mistress Margery."

"I am; but nothing will turn him when his mind is once made up."

"Now, Madge dear, do not you go and worry grandmother with your fooleries," said Rupert, half coaxingly and half impatiently. "You know you would not have said No yourself, if Harold had offered to lend the horse to you."

Margery laughed, and sitting down before the fire began to toast the bread for supper.

"Well, good night, Mistress Margery," said Clive; "there will be no moon to-night, so I must not linger."

"But you are not going home now? You promised to stay to meet the abbot, you know. Besides, you really cannot walk all that distance; can he, Ru?"

"No, no, Clive; I never meant that. Stay here to-night and ride home in the morning, and I will take Navarre from Cressley."

"I feel sure I could walk. I am much stronger now."

"I shall tell mother, if you say any more about it, Mr. Clive," said Margery; "and she will keep you fast prisoner till Lady Elmer sends for

you! I did tell her that you would stay here to-night."

"But I come so often," protested Clive; "and it would like me well to see you through your treasure adventure."

"Of course you must. I shall depend on you to scare off the ghost. I wonder if he is expecting of us to-night," said Madge. "He must wonder what Rupert has been doing unearthing of his old gravestone."

"Your bread is scorching, Mistress Margery," said Clive, trying not to start and listen for footsteps.

"I wonder whether father means us to wait for supper until he has done setting forth all our wrongs to the king. If he doth it in full, as the prince advised, methinks we shall go hungry till midnight."

"They say Prince Rupert hath little influence at court," said Clive. "I trust it may not be true; but his own signal loyalty hath received poor and small reward enough. The king hath done nothing worth for him."

"He said as much," replied Madge, sighing. "I doubt little good will come of this memorial; and yet father looks as if all our troubles were already ended."

CHAPTER VII.

NAVARRE.

MADGE was up long before the late winter dawn, trying to freshen Rupert's worn clothes with knots of bright yellow ribbon taken from her own best gown. The arrangement of some scarlet ribbons on Harold's dove-colored suit had suggested the idea, so she had been obliged to rise early to carry it out. Rupert's best, or rather only, lace collar also needed attention, for the delicate meshes were broken in a place or two, and it required washing and ironing. Lastly, the elaborate hilt of her father's old rapier, which the lad always wore on state occasions, might be improved with polishing.

When Rupert came into the room she was so busy with the sword that she did not hear his footsteps.

"What are you doing, Madge?" he asked. "You should have left all that to me."

"Nay, Rupert; you will have enough to do of your own work. Are your boots cleaned?"

"I will brush them up now, before I go out."

"Then I think your clothes will be as neat and handsome as we can make them; but I am fain to wish you could have a new suit."

"Your ribbons make it appear well-nigh as good as new, Madge. Methinks I shall speak to the prince about getting a ship by and by. I see no other chance unless we make our fortunes with the abbot's hoards."

"I should miss you mightily, Ru; but if you needs must go, I trust the prince will help you."

Two hours later Rupert had changed his dress and was ready to start. Madge surveyed his garments with anxious interest in the kitchen before she let him go into the courtyard where Clive was holding Navarre by the bridle.

"You would look beautiful, Rupert," she exclaimed, "if you only had a new hat. I did think of trying to lower the crown, but I was frightened lest I should spoil it altogether instead of making of it more modish. The prince's hat was lower in the crown and broader in the brim."

"Where did you find these plumes, Madge?" asked the lad, looking curiously at the yellow feathers that surrounded the high steeple-shaped crown of his velvet hat.

"I took them from the fan my Lady Elmer gave me to use with my new gown."

"Well, Madge, you must take off both plumes and ribbons when I return; and till then I will take the utmost care of them."

"If you do, it will be something fresh. I never heard of a lad taking care of his clothes, saving Mr. Clive. Have you remembered your shoes?"

It would never do to wait on the prince in heavy and, perchance, miry boots."

"Yes; they are in the saddlebag, Madge."

Rupert's dress had been the subject of so much anxious thought that it really merits some description.

It consisted of a jacket of brown cloth, open up the front, and so short that it displayed at the waist a blouse-like shirt of fine Holland, which had full sleeves terminating in lace bands at the wrists. The sleeves of the jacket itself were scarcely worthy of the name, for they were open to the shoulder and were so short that they barely reached the elbow, where they were tied with knots of ribbon. Full trousers, gathered to a band just below the knee and decorated with a frill of silk, brown stockings, and low shoes tied with ribbon completed the costume for the house. Now, however, the splendors of Rupert's attire were much obscured by the above-mentioned riding boots and by a short cloak he had donned* for the journey.

A peddler had fortunately happened to call at the abbey in the early morning, and by him Harold had sent a note to his sister, begging her to send another horse so that Rupert could set forth on his journey without going round by the castle.

They all assembled in the courtyard to see him off, and when at last he was mounted on Clive's

beautiful restive horse Madge clapped her hands with delight ; but Mrs. Staynor's eyes grew dim, for Rupert looked as gay and gallant a cavalier as her youngest boy, poor Dick, when he waved his last farewell to her before the fatal field of Mars-ton Moor.

"Now, Rupert," cried Clive, "are you ready? Navarre is all impatience. Keep a steady hand on the rein, but do not bear too hard, for the beast hath a temper, and shows it if he thinks you mean to cross him."

"All right, Hal ; let go," replied Rupert ; and as the mettlesome creature sprang forward he turned and waved his hat to those upon the steps as fearlessly as if he were perfectly at home on the back of the flying animal.

Madge replied with a flourish of her white apron, and all joined in the shout of good-by.

"You are very good, Mr. Clive," said Margery gratefully as they reëntered the house. "Poor Ru ! it is so great pleasure to him to look for once like a gentleman !"

Clive smiled.

"Methinks he never looks like anything else, Mistress Margery."

Madge made a courtesy and said : —

"Thank you, Mr. Clive. I am fain to think you are right ; but indeed this life is hard for Ru."

"Is it not hard for you also, Mistress Madge?"

"Have you not heard me bewail my lot full often, Mr. Clive? Yes; it is hard for all."

"Easier times must come, at least for Rupert and you, Mistress Madge. If right were done, Mr. Staynor would now be a baron or an earl."

Madge laughed.

"Ay, Mr. Clive, that would truly be a noble consolation. Perchance my lord baron would eat his dry bread with a better appetite, and wear a patched cloak with a nobler dignity than plain Mr. Staynor can."

"Mistress Madge, I shall hold you for little better than a republican if you scoff thus at rank and title."

"It was at the thought of such threadbare nobility; but mother hath before now reproved me, Mr. Clive, for using so great plainness and openness toward you. I am sensible it must be shocking to your notion of what is fitting."

"Nay; believe me, fair Mistress Madge, it is but shocking to my sense of right that such things can be under our own lawful king. I do hope Rupert's errand will have so good results as your father seems to expect."

"I trust so; and that Ru will come back sound and whole. It liked me ill enough, Mr. Clive, to hear of Navarre's temper."

"I wished but to warn Rupert. There is no occasion to be frightened for him, when he hath so little fear for himself."

"It is just that that worries me. He loves danger too well and hath neither prudence nor caution. He hath only been on horseback three or four times in his life."

By this time Rupert had got some miles on his journey. He did not share Madge's distrust of his powers of managing Navarre, let him show what temper he might. At first all went well. He crossed the common at a gallop, then drawing rein a little trotted briskly down the long straggling street of Denham village, enjoying the admiring glances of the good dames and the outspoken comments of the youngsters, and honoring his acquaintances with low and courtly bows. He prided himself rather upon the ease with which he could accomplish these salutations on horseback, and taking for his model Prince Rupert's parting bow to his grandmother, he practiced this new feat upon the village maids and matrons, receiving in return most respectful courtesies, for they all regarded him as the wronged but rightful heir of all that had once belonged to his grandfather.

Now Navarre was as nervous as his master, and by no means approved of the train of shouting boys who were following Rupert's majestic progress through the village in a triumphal procession. He pricked up his ears, shook his head, and shied halfway across the road at the sight of an old woman in a red cloak bobbing up and

down in a succession of quick courtesies, while she loudly blessed the young squire and told him that both he and his horse were "mighty pretty." Rupert, thinking the horse was trying to take advantage of his ignorance, brought down his riding whip rather smartly on the creature's neck, and, more insulted than hurt, Navarre gave a jump that nearly shook his rider from his back, and then sprang forward with the bit between his teeth.

In the first moment of that breathless race Rupert felt as if he were flying, and rather enjoyed it. The wind whistled past his ears; the shouts of the children grew fainter in the distance; Denham was left far behind; and still up hill and down dale, through wood and hollow, Navarre kept the same wild pace. The road soon seemed less familiar, and Rupert, afraid of going out of his way, began to drag heavily at the bridle, thinking, even in that moment of great danger, how odd it seemed that Clive could manage the animal so easily.

"Stop!" he shouted, tugging at the bit. "Stop, Navarre! softly, now, softly!"

But Navarre's temper had been tried to the utmost, and now he meant to have his own way. It was many a day since he had enjoyed such a gallop. Rupert's hat flew off, but he did not heed his loss, for the matter was getting serious. The more he tugged and shouted the harder Navarre galloped in the blind, wild fury that possesses

runaways. Rupert feared that the brute would injure himself in his madness, and that thought gave him more anxiety than his own danger.

Hitherto a clear course had been before him, but now a turn in the road showed a cart heavily laden with rolls of leather. Fearing a collision in the narrow road, Rupert shouted to the man to clear the way, and drew hard upon the left rein. The horse turned suddenly across the unfenced country in his headlong race. It was rough riding at that speed; Rupert lost both stirrups, but still held on, till straight across their course a pebbly brook came into view. The steep banks had hidden it till too late. Without a pause Navarre endeavored to leap, but, exhausted by his long gallop and impeded by Rupert's efforts to check his speed, he fell short, and horse and rider came down together, half on the bank and half in the water.

For a few moments Navarre lay gasping where he fell; then finding the water cold to his hind quarters, he shook himself and slowly rose, trembling from head to foot. A deep draught of the pure water partially calmed his nerves, and scrambling up the bank he began to wander beside the stream, smelling at the grass, which was still green in patches. But his past excitement and ill-temper and his present aches and pains had spoiled his appetite, and he ate none of it.

Meanwhile his rider lay with his feet in the

stream and his white face turned up toward the sky, cold and unconscious as if death had claimed him. The blood oozed slowly from a deep cut in his forehead, and the chilly water washed over his boots and played with the knots of gay ribbon that Madge had sewn on so proudly.

At length he recovered from his swoon, but it was a long time after he opened his eyes before he made any effort to move. When he did so he was so numbed and stiff and sore that he could scarcely drag himself out of the water. Putting up his hand to clear away the long hair that had blown across his eyes, he was surprised to find blood upon it. Gradually his memory returned; he knew where he was and how he had come there.

He thought of his errand, of Clive's loan to him, and even of poor Madge's bedraggled ribbons, before it occurred to him that he must make an attempt to struggle up the bank to where there would be some chance of his being seen and helped. Dipping his handkerchief in the brook he washed the blood from his face and tried to rise, but could not. Next he tried to draw himself up by means of the weeds and stones, but they gave way and he slipped down to the water's edge again. His left arm was quite useless, he could not even lift it, and his feet ached with cold till he could scarcely bear the pain. After resting a minute or two he once

more scrambled out of the water; but the bank was so sloping that he feared that he might again lose consciousness, slip back into it, and be drowned; or days might pass before any one chanced to cross the brook and see him, and death by starvation would be even more horrible.

He tried to call for help, but his voice sounded unnaturally weak, and he was hopeless of being heard. Despair seized him; for to one of his disposition the idea of having to lie there waiting for death without the power to make any effort to save himself was far more terrible than the possibility of being smothered in the marsh had been, while he was still strong and able to seek for a path through it. He was haunted too with dreadful fears for the fate of the soul for which he had cared so little; but he was too weak and worn out even to think connectedly. His senses were leaving him again when the clink of iron against a stone roused him.

He looked up only to see Navarre's head bent down toward him in seeming curiosity. He tried to touch the soft nose with his hand, but could not reach, and his movement frightened the beast away. A sudden thought struck him, and drawing out his sword with great difficulty he stuck his white handkerchief upon it, pushing it close down to the hilt, and then half rising he flung it into the air with all the force he could muster,

hoping that it would stick into the bank, and so draw attention to the spot where he was lying. Alas! it fell with a splash into the water at his feet, and Rupert sank back in another fainting fit.

Some hours later he awoke in a low, dimly lighted chamber, and found himself lying in a hard but very clean bed, around which curtains were drawn to exclude the light. He tried to turn round, but was so weak that it was easier to lie still. His left arm was bound tightly to his body, and the cut on his forehead was plastered and bandaged so that he could scarcely open his eyes. Where he was he neither knew nor greatly cared, till the sight of a half-familiar figure at the foot of the bed awakened his curiosity. He could not remember where he had seen that burly form and plain, expressive face before.

"Where am I?" he was beginning.

"Drink this, my son, and ask no questions for thy health's sake," said the man, raising him gently enough with one hand and putting a cup to his lips with the other. The boy obeyed, and was laid down again like an infant by his strange nurse, who then seated herself by the bedside, just out of sight behind the curtain.

Rupert lay thinking lazily for some minutes, and then said:—

"Fair sir, mine head is strangely confused. I should know you, but"—

"Did I not bid thee be silent? The physician saith perfect quiet is thine only hope."

This grim reply turned Rupert's meditations into another channel, but he still felt so weak that his thoughts were of the vaguest possible character.

Meanwhile Obadiah Kenrick (for it was in his house that Rupert was lying) sat watching beside him in intense anxiety. What he ought to do he knew not. The physician had said that any excitement might throw the boy into a fever which would very likely prove fatal; therefore the shoemaker could not reconcile it with his conscience even to speak to him about his soul; neither could he feel satisfied to let him lie there in danger without trying to teach him of the Saviour. All night long he watched, sometimes by the bed and sometimes for a few minutes at a time in the little kitchen below, where his great Bible lay open on the table with a candle beside it.

Rupert was certainly in danger, for the physician, though a clever man in his way, had followed the usual practice of the time and had commenced his treatment with a severe bleeding, though the boy was so weak that he could not raise himself in bed. Toward midnight he began to get very restless and the shoemaker was more perplexed than ever. He talked fast and loud of Prince Rupert and the king, then cried to Navarre to stop, or called over and over again for Margery.

Then came a pause, followed by such dreary lamentations that Kenrick's rough cheeks were wet with tears. He could understand him now. The dread and horror of one face to face with death was upon him; his sins hid from him the merciful face of God, and in the awful agony of his despair he thought that he had already joined the ranks of the lost souls in their misery.

"My son," so spake the deep voice at his side, "Christ Jesus came to seek and save the *lost*."

"Nay; we are past all hope," shrieked Rupert, turning his wild eyes toward him for a moment.

"God forbid!" was the reply. "None is past hope till the Lord almighty wills it, and he says, 'Whosoever will, let *him* take of the water of life freely.'"

But Rupert's wandering thoughts would not hold to one point so long. "I am drowning," he wailed. "Help! help! oh! the water is so cold!" Clutching wildly at the curtains he tried to draw himself out of the water into which he fancied he was sinking.

But the strong arm about him soothed him, and he sank back on the pillows in a state of exhaustion, while Obadiah knelt down beside the bed.

"O God," he said, "for Christ's sake spare the life of this dear lad. Jesus loved him, Lord, and died for him. Show thy mercy upon him, for the sake of thine own dear Son, and give him life everlasting."

Slowly the long night went by and towards morning Rupert sank into a deep sleep and woke refreshed. Seeing that he was sleeping calmly, the shoemaker had gone down to do his housework (for his wife was dead and he lived alone) and to put his little shop in order for the day; but many a time during his performance of these duties he had crept in on tiptoe to look at his patient.

"Good sir," said Rupert as he put his head in at the door for the third time, "how long have I been lying here?"

"Since yesterday at even; but remember thou wast told to be silent for the sake of thine own safety!"

"Yes, sir; but I must speak, now I can, or it will worry me the more. First, I would thank you for your kind care of me"—

"Nay, if that is all, thou hadst best keep silence."

"Nay, sir; I have more to say. Did you find a sealed packet addressed to Prince Rupert at the Royal Oak Tavern, Altrincham, anywhere about me?"

"Samuel Halberd, who was with me when I found thee in thine extremity, said something of such a packet, and, being on his way to Altrincham, and judging that it was of importance, he engaged to deliver it to the malignant himself, though for mine own particular my mind misgave me at the thought of any dealings with that bloodthirsty

tyrant and robber. However, the matter resteth with Samuel's own conscience, and if he alloweth it, far be it from me to condemn him therein."

Rupert felt too weak to take up the cudgels in defense of his hero; moreover his host's great kindness made it the more disagreeable to have to contradict him; so he only said, "They will expect me at home this evening, good Master Kenrick, but I fear I cannot walk" —

"Walk!" repeated Obadiah with a short laugh; "see first if thou canst sit up."

"What can I do?" said Rupert. "I cannot consent to be a burden upon you, worthy sir!"

"Trouble not thyself on that score, my son. The Lord hath sent thee to me, and what I do for thee is for his sake."

"But, sir, it is right that you should know that it may be many a long day before I can repay even what you expend on me."

"The Lord will repay me. Thou art his guest here, and therefore right welcome to the best of all I have."

"Then, good Master Kenrick, could you add to all your kindnesses that of sending a messenger for me to Denham Abbey, the ruined house upon the hill beyond the village? Let him ask for Mistress Margery, and she will reward him for his services."

"Is thy mother living, my son?"

"No; she died before I can remember. My

grandfather and grandmother have stood to me in the place of parents ; it is to them I would send to assure them of my safety."

"Art thou thyself assured of that, my son?" said the old man solemnly. "Last night I thought that God Almighty had willed to take thee hence ere the sun rose. He hath added another day of grace to the years of thy life, and now I bid thee turn to Jesus by faith, and ask him to wash thy sins away."

"Think you, sir, that I am in present danger?" said Rupert slowly.

"The strongest of us cannot certainly count on living even for an hour," was the grave reply; "and doth it not seem idle to ask of danger when thou art wounded and bruised and weak as a babe? Most men are ready enough to perceive their peril at such times as this."

"Then, good sir, haste your messenger, and beg one of them, grandfather or Margery, to come to me. There is much I must say, but grandmother could never bear to see me thus. Is the horse I rode much injured?"

"Nay; stiff and sore enough, I warrant, but it hath no bones broken. I will send one on thine errand; but now I charge thee to think no more of this world and its toys, but turn thy mind to thy Redeemer. Alas! I know that thou hast as yet no sure and certain hope whereon to stand, for last night I heard thee claim thy place amongst

the lost. Hearken : I will give thee a noble text whereon to rest thy soul : ' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ' ; and again, ' If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ' "

Repeating these words a second time in his slow, emphatic tones, the shoemaker closed the door and left Rupert to his own reflections.

" Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, " he murmured over and over with a sense of peace and rest. He was not ignorant of the story of the great love of God's holy Son, but till recently he had never thought that it was any concern of his. Now, in this moment of his utter weakness, he longed for some strength to lean upon. If he were really going down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he shrank from the thought of making the journey alone. Kenrick's rough but well-meant words had set him sternly face to face with the king of terrors. He knew that he must bow before him now or a few years later ; but before the horror of thick darkness fell upon him Kenrick's texts brought back to his mind the thought of the deep, all-surpassing love of God. The fear of death faded

away, and, perhaps all the more readily because of his utter weakness, he gave himself up thankfully and entirely to his trust in the eternal Love and Goodness. Miserable and sinful as he was, he knew that he was safe, for life or death, in the tender care of the Saviour of all mankind.

The next time Obadiah came upstairs Rupert was asleep again with a calm quiet smile on his face. The shoemaker went down and began to sing, or rather to hum, the tune the lad had sung in the marsh.

Presently a little girl came in with a small pair of badly worn boots in her hands. "Please, Master Kenrick, mother do want to know how much 't would be for mending of these?"

"I doubt, little maid, whether I can make shift to patch 'em at all," said the shoemaker, looking at them over his great spectacles without lifting his head. "Be they the best thou hast?"

"Yes, sir," she replied with a rueful glance at the poor little boots.

"Well, I'll mend 'em for thee, Molly, and thou mayst tell thy good mother that they sha'n't cost her more than a penny. Is Ned at home to-day?"

"Ay, Master Kenrick."

"Then run you, Molly, and tell him that I've a job for him."

The little girl needed no second bidding, and in less than ten minutes her brother was at Master

Kenrick's side. "What dost want, master?" he asked.

"Dost thou know where Denham Abbey is?"

"An old ruined place, with a tower? It's full twelve miles away!"

"Canst go there before dark and carry a message without forgetting of a word of it?" Obadiah spoke abruptly and sternly, as his manner was with boys, for he regarded them as needing constant and severe repression to keep them out of mischief.

"Try me, Master Kenrick, and see," said the lad.

"Well, then, go to Denham Abbey, ask there for Mistress Margery, and tell her that Mr. Rupert Staynor hath met with accident, and is lying sick at my house here. Make her understand well where I live and how she may come here, and tell her the young man desireth to see her or his grandfather with as little delay as may be."

"If she asketh whether he is very sick, what be I to say?"

"Say that he hath a broken arm and is bruised, and somewhat inclined to fever. The truth is ever best. Tell her that Samuel Halberd, who drives the carrier's cart between Denham and Weston, was traveling slowly hither when he did hear a furious galloping behind him. He turned to see, and the young man cried to him to let him by, but struck off across the fields before he reached him. Samuel went on his way, till, when

he came to the hill above Horton, he looked back and, his sight being something of the longest, he spied a horse without a rider walking slowly beside the brook. Being now so near mine house, he judged it most prudent to come on and take counsel with me. Thinking the young gallant might but laugh at us for our pains, we tarried to eat a morsel of meat and bait the horse; and then having unloaded the cart, we turned back to seek for him. A little past the hill, we saw the horse again, and leaving the cart in the way we set forth on foot to catch it. This done Samuel went up the brook, and I toward the woods, but he presently uttered a loud shout, and I ran to him. 'The man is dead,' says he, standing looking down into the water. 'Nay, not so,' says I. 'Go thou, Master Samuel, and bring up thy cart.' With that he left me, and with much ado I got the young man upon the top of the bank, and feeling of his heart I was persuaded that his life was in him. With no small difficulty we carried him home in the cart, and Master Samuel, going on his way, left word at Dr. Seymour's to come hither and see what was amiss. Now, canst thou remember all this to tell to Mistress Margery of whom he speaks? But if she be not within, ask then for Mr. Staynor. If thou dost mine errand well, thou shalt have a silver sixpence for thy pains!"

Ned nodded with sparkling eyes, and set out on his long walk with a determined countenance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD SHOEMAKER.

SUPPER was on the table and Madge was flattening her face against the frosty diamond shaped panes of the window in the recess which commanded a distant view of the Denham road. Mrs. Staynor was at the table, and Mr. Staynor had just entered, saying, "Come, Madge, my girl, Rupert will not be hastened by looking for him."

Madge sat down, but still looked wistfully at the gathering gloom without. "Listen!" she said, rising suddenly; "I hear some one."

A distant rapping was heard, and Madge, in an unusual state of nervous anxiety, hurried out to discover the cause. It was not any one at the kitchen door; but following the noise she at last made her way to an old iron-studded door in one of the half-ruined walls.

"Stay!" she called; "this door is nailed up. I will come round to you."

Outside the door she found a shivering, ill-clad boy, and leading him into the kitchen she gave him a seat in front of the hearth.

"I was to ask for Mistress Margery," he said.

"I am Mistress Margery Staynor. Who sent you? a young gentleman on horseback?"

"Nay, ma'am. Master Kenrick, at the shoe-shop, sent me."

"Come, make haste!" cried Margery impatiently. "What hath happened?"

"Mr. Rupert Staynor—I think that was the name he said—leastways"—

"What of him, boy?" said Margery sharply. "Is he hurt?"

"Yes, mistress. He is very sick. His arm's broke and he has a fever. Dame Brown, that's next-door neighbor to Master Kenrick, she said he talked idle all night long. She says the poor young gentleman will die, certain, and"—

"Father," said Margery, going to the parlor door, "there's a lad here I wish you would speak to."

Mr. Staynor saw her white face, and shutting the door followed her into the passage.

"It's about Rupert, father. There is a boy here come to say he's hurt—dying, I think. Oh, what shall we do?"

"I will speak to him," said the squire, going to the kitchen. "When was Mr. Rupert hurt?"

"Yesterday morning—no, last night I think; I mean Master Kenrick said"—

"Make haste, boy! There is no time to lose," Margery interrupted.

The boy stared at her in blank bewilderment,

and Mr. Staynor said gently, "My child, you confuse the lad ; let him take his time ; it will really save in the end."

Without another word Madge sat down on a stool by the fire and left it to her father to extract all the boy could tell them. It was slow torture to her, but she endured it. Then Mr. Staynor went in to break the news to his wife, while Margery gave the lad a great bowl of hot bread and milk, determining all the time to go back with him that night. But when she returned to the parlor her father said quietly, "Margery, your mother and I have been talking this over, and I will go back with the boy. I am exceedingly thankful he is in such good hands, and I trust I may find that the ill news has been made the most of."

"O father, I was thinking I could go!" exclaimed Madge in bitter disappointment. "You could not walk so far."

"Darling, you could not go to-night, alone with that boy ; but to-morrow you shall go, if Rupert needs you."

Madge rubbed away a few tears ; then bravely kissed her father, tied a thick woollen comforter about his neck, and brought him his hat and stick.

As soon as he was gone Mrs. Staynor had a terrible fit of hysterics, and declared that the abbot was in the room. At last Madge got her to bed and to sleep, and after watching her for half an hour she crept into bed beside her.

Very early in the morning the girl rose and brought some hot gruel to her mother's bedside. "Mother," she said, "do not get up yet; it is quite early. I will send up Kate Morrison to stay with you."

"Where are you going, daughter?"

"I want to speak to Lady Elmer. I will not be long away."

Kate Morrison was an old woman who had been a servant at the abbey before her marriage, and now in the days of her widowhood she liked nothing better than to come up to spend an hour or two talking over old times with Mrs. Staynor.

Fortunately she was at home, so Margery hurried on to see Lady Elmer without delay. She had a vague idea that in some way Edith might help her, and she thought Harold ought to know about his horse; but she was too miserable to think clearly.

Before she had got up the wide flight of steps to the door, it flew open and Lady Elmer ran out to meet her, looking as fresh as a rose even in the gray morning light. "You poor little maid!" she cried, kissing Margery on both cheeks. "Come in and warm yourself. What hath happened?"

"It is Rupert," murmured Madge, trying hard to keep back her tears.

"What, dearest? Hath that wild brute hurt him?"

Margery nodded; she could not speak.

"O Madge, dear! Is he dangerously hurt?"

"The boy said so. Father went last night. He is at Horton."

"Come to the fire, Madge. It may not be so bad as they thought. John dear, wheel up that chair to the hearth. Margery, drink this, and don't try to talk for a moment."

"I thought Mr. Clive might like to see about the horse," said Margery after a pause. "I do not think he hath suffered much hurt, but I almost forgot him last night."

"Of course," said Clive; "trouble not yourself about him, Mistress Margery. He deserves to be hurt, the brute! I wish I had n't been so great a fool as to press Rupert to take him."

"Poor Ru did not need much pressing," said Madge.

"John," said Lady Elmer, "I want you, if you can make shift to spare a moment."

The consultation was a short one, and after breakfast Edith ordered her coach and went to fetch Mrs. Staynor to pay her a visit, leaving poor tired-out Margery asleep on a lounge.

Fortunately the frost had improved the roads, for the horses had by no means completed their labors for that day when they returned to the castle. After an early dinner Lady Elmer ordered the carriage out again, saying, "Now, Margery, if you are ready, we will go to see Rupert."

A quaint little inn stood in the center of Horton, overlooking the village green. It was not much larger than the thatch-covered cottages about it, for Horton was not in the direct line of road between any great towns, and few travelers found their way thither. A magnificently colored painting of an immense red flower rising out of the middle of a very yellow diadem marked it even to the eyes of those who could not read the legend inscribed on the lower part of the sign as the Rose and Crown. Inside, the house was poor and plain enough, though the uncarpeted floors were well scrubbed, the hard beds scrupulously clean, and everything that could be made to shine shone its brightest. Rows of pewter pots glistened like silver in the firelight of the great kitchen, and from the unplastered beams of the roof hung sides of bacon and huge mahogany-colored hams as a visible token of the plenty that reigned beneath the rule of the smiling, rosy-cheeked landlady.

To this place Lady Elmer drove; and as a coach and four was by no means a common sight in Horton, all the inhabitants of the village turned out to feast their eyes upon it. As it drew up before the inn the mistress and her two daughters and the hostler all came out to take the commands of the illustrious arrivals; but Lady Elmer did not alight. She requested them to prepare beds and supper and to light a good fire

in the parlor, and then begged to be directed to the shop of Master Obadiah Kenrick the shoemaker.

It was so near by, however, that after a brief consultation they all got out of the vehicle and walked to the old Puritan's shop. He was sitting at work with his leather apron on, mending Molly's little shoes, when they knocked at the door.

"Good day to you, sir," said Edith. "This is Mistress Margery Staynor. We understand that you have had the goodness to take in a dear friend of ours when sick and in trouble, and we should esteem it a great kindness if you would permit Mistress Margery at least to see him."

The old man looked keenly from one to another, and his hard face softened as he glanced at Margery. The self-control expressed in her white face pleased him as well as the simplicity of her attire. "Be not sorrowful overmuch," he said, addressing her; "the lad is like to live, I think. The fever hath somewhat abated."

"O sir!" cried Margery, grasping his arm with both hands and looking up into his face as if her destiny hung on his will, "O sir! do please let me see him!"

"Softly, softly, my maid; his grandfather is with him, and the doctor hath forbid much talking. Sit ye down, friends, while I go to inquire concerning him."

Five minutes later the squire descended the creaking stair, saying, —

“Rupert is better. There is good hope of his recovery now. He sends his love to you all and thanks you for making this journey to see him. He wanted to have had you into his chamber, but Dr. Seymour hath said ‘Nay,’ and indeed I think he is right; the lad can scarce lift up his hand even now.”

“O father!” exclaimed Margery, “I must see him! I will be quiet. I’ll only look at him. Just let me have five minutes; sure that would not hurt him.”

The squire looked irresolutely at Lady Elmer, and Edith said gently: “Poor Margery! let her see him, if you dare, sir. I know she will be quiet.”

“I will! I will!” said Madge; and waiting for no further permission she made her way upstairs. The door of Rupert’s room was unlatched, and entering softly she stood for a moment at the bedside, looking down on the face which these few hours of pain had altered almost beyond recognition.

The shoemaker touched her arm and said in a whisper: “He is asleep. Look at him, my maid, and come down.” So saying he left the room; but the sound of his heavy footsteps, which no amount of care could render noiseless on those creaking stairs, disturbed Rupert. He

opened his eyes and said: "I am not asleep, Madge."

The girl bent and kissed his cheek, saying, —

"Dear Ru, don't try to talk or stir. I promised to be quiet."

"Madge darling," he said, and the sound of his voice reassured her, it was so much more natural than his looks, "I feel sure I shall get better now. My head is clear to-day. I ought not to have had so great folly as to think I could ride a spirited beast like Navarre without ever being taught. The letter went to the prince all right. Master Kenrick" —

"Hush, Ru! you must tell me all by and by. Mother bade me to give you her dear love and say how sad she was not to come to visit you; but indeed, Ru, it was better not."

"Yes; poor grandmother! She must not see me yet a while. I suppose I look something ghastly."

"'Tis the fault of that bandage, Ru. Is your head hurt?"

"Cut a little on a stone; that is all."

"Rupert, would it worry you if I could bring them to let me tarry here to nurse you? Mother is at the castle."

"No, Madge; it would like me well. Hath Harold seen Navarre?"

"No. He says if he hath received hurt, it only serves him right for the ill he hath done you. Now, good-by."

Meanwhile Lady Elmer had begged the squire to walk with her to the inn, leaving Clive to wait for Margery. She had a plan to propose, but was afraid of offending the old gentleman by seeming to offer him charity. "How soon may Rupert be moved?" she asked.

"Not till to-morrow sennight, at the least," said Mr. Staynor. "I do not know how to contrive. Master Kenrick hath behaved with exceeding great kindness, but I cannot suffer him to bear this burden longer than may be avoided; neither doth it like me to leave the lad alone with him, either for his own sake or the good man's."

"Could you not take lodging at the Rose and Crown?" said Edith. "Leave it to me and I will contrive it all for you. It would break Madge's heart to carry her home now."

"It would be a sore grief to her, I know; but, fair lady, I scarce know how to accomplish" —

"Speak not of that, good sir. I shall esteem it as a signal favor if you will leave me to arrange this matter."

The squire hesitated a little, but in the end Lady Elmer took her own way, as she usually did. She and Harold stayed one night at the little inn and saw Rupert in the morning. After their departure Margery and her father settled down to a strange life, taking their meals and sleeping at the Rose and Crown, but passing almost all their waking hours at the old Puritan's.

Rupert steadily gained strength, and by the end of the week was able to sit up for a few hours at a time. Greatly to Margery's surprise the lad seemed happy and contented in spite of his aches and pains and the wearisome confinement in one dingy room. "How can you bear it so bravely, Ru?" she asked one day.

"Because I must, I suppose," he said with a quiet smile.

"Do you know you are getting almost provokingly like father?" said the girl. "Nothing ever puts him in a temper. I believe he would go into prison without saying a word, if any one wanted to send him—as they may soon enough."

"Margery!" said Rupert after a long pause, "I have something to tell you. Sit down, dear."

Margery dropped in a heap beside the bed. "Now, Rupert, I am waiting. I hope it is something diverting!"

"No, Madge; it is not. It is that the day I believed I was dying I began to understand, quite suddenly, how much the Lord Jesus loves us."

"And I, Rupert, when I thought you dying, could scarce even say 'Our Father' for thinking what heavy and grievous things God had laid on us through no fault of our own."

"Ay; but, Margery, we should never doubt his love. That horrid night after my fall, I seemed to hang for hours above the pit itself; and then, O Margery, I thought I had wakened amongst

the lost. I cried out in my horror, but Master Kenrick said that Jesus came to save the *lost*, and held me in his strong arms; and in the morning when my head grew clear he gave me, as he said, a text whereon to rest. As I lay thinking of it, all became plain and I knew that the Lord Jesus loved us. Grandfather hath told me the same many a time, but I think, as it says in the Bible, mine ears have been stopped. Now, please God, I mean to be Christ's true servant all my days; and, Madge dear, I wish you would serve him too."

Rupert spoke slowly, but his eyes were bright and his cheeks flushed as if the fever had not quite left him. It was very difficult for him to speak thus, especially to Madge; but the second of Obadiah's texts haunted him, and he had resolved in the quiet of his long hours of sickness to begin to follow his Master openly and boldly.

Margery looked at him with an earnest, troubled gaze; then said, "Rupert, you are talking too much. Drink this and lie down; I will be back in about an hour."

She did not make any reply to what he had told her, and Rupert felt pained and disappointed.

She meant to take a walk by the river; but as she came downstairs the shoemaker exclaimed, "Well, young mistress, art come to have a chat with me?" and the girl sat down on the three-legged stool opposite him, dreamily rubbing one of his bits of smooth leather against her cheek.

The old man looked at her sharply over his spectacles and said slowly, "Mistress Margery, it hath been borne in upon my mind to ask thee to-day the question that concerneth thee more than aught else in life. Art thou washed in the blood of the Lamb who died for sinners?"

Margery was silent, still turning about that worthless bit of leather.

"Art thou serving of the Lord or the devil?" asked the grim voice again.

"You would say the devil, sir!" said Margery impatiently. "What right have you to question me thus?"

"The right of one whose highest honor is to do his Master's behests. Think well, my maid; this is no fit subject for thy mirth. If the devil is thy lord, thou shalt have a part in his fearful portion at the judgment of the Great Day. God will bid you depart from him into the unquenchable burning of the lake of fire. Canst thou stedfastly set thy face to travel onwards to such a doom?"

"Master Kenrick, how can I help myself? The Lord saves whom he will, and leaves the rest to perish." Margery spoke bitterly.

"Nay, Mistress Margery, charge not thy Maker with injustice. Durst thou say he cannot or will not save thee? Why, child, he waiteth to be gracious! 'Come now, and let us reason together,' saith the Lord: 'though your sins be as scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

"It is useless talking, Master Kenrick; I cannot go to God."

"Child, child! pray that God may take away the stony heart out of thy flesh and give thee a heart of flesh. Thou hast owned that thy life is spent in the service of the devil; therefore thou canst not plead ignorance as an excuse. Kneel and beg the Lord to bruise and break thy wicked heart to powder, rather than suffer thee to cling still to thy sin."

Laying his strong hand on her shoulder, the shoemaker drew her into the little kitchen, and almost forced her to her knees, saying, "Pray, my maid, pray while there is time."

But Margery knelt there in defiant silence, angry with "this common man's impertinence." There was a long pause, then in tones that chilled and frightened her the shoemaker began: "O God Almighty, give strength to this poor weak wretched maid to ask for thy forgiveness, and to put her trust in thee. Thou knowest, Lord, how vile and abominable she is in thy holy sight; thou seest the full blackness of her guilt, thou countest the innumerable multitude of her transgressions, but thou hast loved her and died for her. Draw her from the devil's service; let him not have dominion over her. Save her from her own wicked miserable self, and make her pure

and clean and sweet before thee. O Father, in mercy send down thy judgments upon her if thy love will not suffice to draw her to thee. Visit her, God Almighty, in this thy day of grace. Cut her not off in her sins" —

Margery had listened so far in sheer astonishment, but now she pressed her hands to her ears that she might hear no more. The prayer went on, but the girl, though still on her knees, threw back her head defiantly and looked angrily at the old man who with eyes and hands uplifted was entreating a blessing for her. When at last he rose and returned to his work, Madge went upstairs again with her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashing.

"Rupert," she said, "I cannot come here any longer. I must go home."

"What hath happened?" he asked in alarm.

"This old shoemaker hath insulted me. He hath forgotten his base condition entirely, Ru. Doubtless he thinks because he hath been able to do you some service that he is our equal."

"Have patience with him, Madge darling, for my sake."

"Even for your sake, Ru, I can never see him again. How do I know that his shop was not full of people, watching of how I was made a fool of? I tell you, Ru, I think he is nought but a cheat and a hypocrite with his religion. He is just like those Pharisees who used to stand up in

the marketplace to pray. Oh, I hope you'll never be so carried away, Rupert."

"Again, Margery, what is it he hath done?"

"Done! Well, if you needs must have it, he began asking of impertinent questions, then he dragged me into the kitchen, and prayed at me, calling me vile and I know not what!"

Just at that instant there was a knock at the door, and on Madge's crying "Come in," Clive entered. "I rode over, Mistress Madge, to ask how Rupert is, and whether he will be ready to come home to-morrow, if the coach is sent for him," he said.

"It is the first I have heard of it, Mr. Clive," said Margery, vexed that she had not been consulted.

"Grandfather promised to tell you," said Rupert. "I suppose he must have forgotten."

"Well, I shall be glad to get away from here," remarked Margery petulantly. "I never want to see the place again."

"I thought you were on excellent terms with the good folk here. I should have been up half an hour ago, but that I saw you were enjoying of a conversation with Rupert's old friend, and I feared to intrude upon you!" said Clive, amused at Margery's dark looks, for he had not heard enough of the conversation to guess their cause.

Margery wished Rupert good-night and followed Clive downstairs, making her coolest and

most distant courtesy to the old shoemaker as she passed.

"Farewell, my maid," he said calmly. "I pray the Lord that he will never permit thee to forget my words till they have done their work. Till then I care little for thy high looks. The servant is not above his Master, and can well afford to be contemned while doing of his work."

Early the following morning the coach drew up before the shoemaker's door. Margery was not within it, having preferred to stay at the Rose and Crown till Rupert was ready; but the old squire had come to give his last warm thanks to Kenrick for his generous kindness. Then he waited in the shop while Odadiah went to fetch Rupert down.

"Sure, lad, I shall miss thee," he said, looking round the dingy room with a sigh.

"I have been a world of trouble to you, good sir," the boy answered, with his arm caressingly around the old man's neck. "I can never thank you for your goodness to me."

"I shall be right well repaid if thou standest firm to thy profession. O lad, thou mayest do a noble work for the Lord; only beware lest thou fall from thy first love. My soul hath yearned for thee with an exceeding mighty longing since the day I heard thee singing the Lord's songs in the marsh. God bless and prosper thee, my son! Now, fare thee well."

"Farewell, Master Kenrick. I shall come hither often to see you when I get strong again."

"Ay, do, Rupert; the place will seem mighty lonely to me when thou art gone. 'Tis weak to lament when the Lord sees fit to take away the earthly props and stays he hath lent for a little season; but I will not deny that at times my lot seems sad and dreary. If I lived more fully in the light of his good Spirit, I should never be thus faint-hearted; but alas! after all my struggling and striving, I am vile and blind and sinful still. Pray for me, lad, that my faith fail not in the hour of temptation."

Thus speaking Obadiah wrapped a huge blanket about the boy and carried him down the narrow stairs, answering his protestations with "Tush, lad! thou art but a feather weight to many I have carried. In my young days I had good strong arms, I promise thee!"

Propped up among the cushions of Sir John's luxurious coach, Rupert made the journey to Cressley without any ill effects, and Edith detained him there for another fortnight, though Madge and her parents would not be persuaded to stay away from home any longer.

Margery felt ill at ease and hoped that the return to her ordinary duties would be a relief to her. She was dissatisfied and unhappy, though she scarcely knew why, beyond a vague feeling that Rupert had deserted her.

On the first evening of their return home Mrs. Staynor went to bed very early, and Madge and her father were left alone. The light from the glancing flames flickered all over the room and lit up brightly and tenderly the figure of the old man as he sat with his head resting on his hand, enjoying the genial warmth of the great logs that blazed on the hearth. His kindly face wore a half smile, as if he were indulging in some pleasant or amusing fancy ; but the firelight that shone on Madge showed little but her dark hair, for her face was in the shadow.

"Father !" she exclaimed at last, "do you like that shoemaker who hath cared for Rupert ?"

"Yes," returned the squire, glancing at her for a moment, then turning back to renewed contemplation of the fire. "Wherefore do you ask, my daughter ?"

"Because I hate him, and I fear he will infect Rupert with his rude, hypocritical ways. He knoweth not when to speak and when to keep silence."

"When I was a lad, Madge, I thought even as you. I judged all to be folly and hypocrisy to which I was not used. Now I know that, though strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life for each soul that God hath made, yet men travel toward the light by many a various path. Kenrick hath walked on one road ; my dear old friend Dr. Blackwell went by another ;

but I trust to meet both where all shall be one in Christ Jesus."

"Father, if the way be narrow, how can men of so great differences alike be in it?"

"Methinks, my child, God requires that each of his servants shall walk faithful to the light he bestoweth on him, and not on another. If a light be set upon a hill, there may be many paths to reach it, all narrow and hard to tread. One may travel through treacherous marsh and bog, another must needs come by wood and field, while yet a third hath to clamber over rough crags and ford dashing torrents, if he would gain the heights."

"But for this Kenrick, father—do not his ways mislike you?"

"You forget, my child, he hath had few advantages of education. It is but natural that at times he should do and say what seemeth to us ill bred or ill advised. You should make allowances and strive to see his true nobility of life. Whatever be his faults, I am assured his one aim and endeavor is to follow after Christ. Doubtless our manner of speech and of life distastes him fully as much as his do us."

Madge shrugged her shoulders. "It is a bitter fate," she said, "to be beholden to a mean, rude fellow such as he for so great obligations."

"My child, you are ungrateful to speak thus. Surely you mean not that you think it so hard to

have to thank a shoemaker for kindness that you would rather have had Rupert left" —

"No, father, no! My tongue is overhasty. For his goodness to Rupert I will thank Master Kenrick while I live."

"Margery dear, I have thought sometimes that as a Christian you should be readier to bear with the lot God hath sent you. The servant of Him who was born in a manger should not take pride in gentle birth and look down on the common folk. If we would be like Christ, we must strive after his meekness and humility."

Margery looked up quickly, but her father was still gazing into the glowing embers, and she checked her sudden impulse to deny to him, as she had already denied to Obadiah, that she was the servant of the meek and lowly Jesus. She could not lightly give her father pain, and so she was silent.

The glow from the fire became redder and steadier as the logs fell to hot coals on the hearth, but Margery did not put on any more wood. More than once she glanced at her father's face, almost resolving to ask him for help in her misery; but she could not talk to him of the horrid doubts that tormented her. She felt too defiant toward God and too angry with Kenrick to wish for assurances of Christ's tender love and compassion. She fancied herself ill-used and aggrieved, and, while declaring that she was driven into sin

by the difficulties that surrounded her, she was determined that she would have her own way, whatever it cost.

"Margery," said Mr. Staynor, after a long pause, "hath your mother ever spoken to you of Geoffrey?"

"No, father; never!"

"I fear, Madge, that she thinks still, with you, that there is no salvation for those who differ from us."

"Father, hath that aught to do with Geoffrey?"

"Yes, Madge; the war had scarce begun when he judged it right to change sides."

"Do you mean that he was a *rebel*, father?"

"He was ever eager in the defense of the rights of the weak and the poor. He thought the king outstepped the bounds of his authority. Thus thinking, I do not blame him that he would not draw his sword in his defense; but, Madge, so passive a course did not satisfy him. Fight he needs must, and against his father, his brethren, and his king. He left our house" —

"The traitor!" interrupted Madge under her breath.

"And from that day was lost to us. We forbade him to see our faces until he returned to his obedience. Now and then we heard news of him, as having been seen in this battle or that. Once Edward and he met in combat, but, thank God! neither was so lost to his old love as to plunge

his sword into his brother's heart. They parted without a word, and for well-nigh twenty years we have not known whether Geoffrey is dead or living. Latterly, Madge, it hath grieved me sore to think how harsh we were to the boy. If he truly thought his late majesty in the wrong, I can see now that it was noble in him to give all for the sake of conscience; but I thought it prating folly then, and it angered me that he should so wound and grieve his mother. To this day, I believe, the loss of him grieves her less than the thought that she had cherished a traitor to his king; but she hath never been the same woman since he departed."

"O father, I wonder more than ever that you can abide the sight of a Roundhead!"

"Nay, Margery, I would give all I once had, were it in my power to bring back the son that God had given us. How do I know but what our cruelty hath driven him into crime and iniquity? Of all the sins and follies of my long life—and God knoweth they have been not few—the casting off of Geoffrey hath been the blackest."

The old man spoke with an intense earnestness that startled Margery. She had never seen his calmness so shaken before.

"Father," she said, "do not grieve so for him. It was his own fault after all."

"Nay, Margery; we did him a cruel wrong. May God forgive us, and out of our evil bring his

good!" So saying, he kissed the girl's forehead, and went up to regain calmness and self-control in his lonely tower watching the peaceful stars; while Margery went to bed, to dream of Rupert's becoming a Puritan and going to live with Obadiah Kenrick in his cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ABBOT'S TREASURE CHEST.

RUPERT," said Margery, three months later, "when shall we open the abbot's grave? I spent our last shilling this morning and mother is talking of endeavoring to sell her wedding gown."

Rupert threw down the wood he was carrying with a loud clatter. "What say you to to-night, Madge?—that is, if Harold comes. We must wait for him."

"Oh, yes! we should never make shift to do it without Harold. For mine own particular I think this night would do as well as another; and without doubt something must be done and that presently. 'Tis strange we do not hear from Prince Rupert."

"I fear the letter hath never reached him. It makes me feel cheap whenever I think of that unlucky ride."

"Ah, well, I can forgive Navarre now that you are well again."

Rupert smiled and stroked her wild hair. He had fully regained his strength at last, though his recovery had been slow; and he had once more fallen into his old life of hunting and outdoor

work. His inability for so long a time to provide the household with either fish or game had much increased the difficulties of housekeeping, and Madge never remembered a time when their supply of food had been so unpalatable and precarious, in spite of Lady Elmer's frequent presents.

The raid on the abbot's hidden treasures had been put off and indeed half forgotten during Rupert's illness, for neither he nor Margery had much real hope of finding anything of importance. But the increasing pressure of poverty had reminded them of their intended search, and they were both in that mood of despondency when it is a relief to try to do something, no matter what.

On this occasion fortune seemed to favor their enterprise. Early in the afternoon Sir John's coach drove up to the door, and Clive alighted.

"You have come in state!" exclaimed Margery. "Have *you* disabled Navarre now?"

"No; the brute is all right. Edith wanted to send a message to Mrs. Staynor, and I volunteered to bring it; that is all. Lord and Lady Brackenridge have honored us with an unexpected visit, and Edith is very anxious that Mr. and Mrs. Staynor should come to meet them. My Lady Brackenridge says she knew your mother well before the troubles, and my lord is a great virtuoso, so he will just suit your father. Do persuade them to come, Mistress Margery. You

know what John is. He hath one of his silent fits on, and poor Edith hath to be polite for both."

"Nothing would like me better," said Margery. "We were thinking that to-night we would begin our search for the treasure, and it would be an excellent opportunity if father and mother were clear away. But perhaps you must needs go home!"

"No; to say truth, I would gladly be excused my Lord Brackenridge's long dissertations on coins and stars and ancient buildings. He is a most learned and ingenious gentleman, I doubt not, but is heavy company for those whose minds are bent on other matters."

"Such as rhymes and meters, Mr. Clive? Well, I will speak to mother, and if she can be persuaded, father can!"

Clive wrote a short note to his sister, hinting darkly at secret and mysterious business which had prevented his return; and Mr. and Mrs. Staynor, after nearly exhausting Margery's powers of persuasion, at last consented to comply with Lady Elmer's request.

Madge began to get supper as soon as she had seen her mother off, and it was just getting dusk when the three conspirators sat down to the meal. They did not light a candle, but Rupert put a great pine log on the fire that crackled and blazed till the room was as bright as day. It was rather a cold, dismal evening, and they made no haste,

for they had all night before them to do their work in peace.

"I have been wondering," said Harold suddenly, "wherefore this business should be done in darkness."

"Whoever heard of digging up treasure by daylight?" remarked Margery. "Mr. Clive, I am surprised that you should suggest so unpoetical a notion."

"Grandfather would think it folly," observed Rupert. "He laughs alike at the ghost and his treasure."

"I know," said Clive. "I would I could be convinced that he is right!"

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Clive, that you are really frightened — Halloo, Ru, look! What is *that* at the window?"

"What, Mistress Margery?" cried Clive with a start. "I see nothing."

"Madge! Madge!" exclaimed Rupert reprovingly. "If you begin in that fashion, we had indeed best leave the enterprise till daylight!"

"But indeed, Ru, I saw a face staring in at the window. It is no foolery. Hark! there is someone stumbling over the ruins."

"I don't hear anything," said Rupert; "and if you are thinking of the abbot" —

"But I was *not*, Ru! I was thinking of benighted travelers or country folk or highwaymen. Whatever I saw was human, that I am sure."

Margery's positive tone ought to have been soothing to the most nervous, but did not seem to offer much consolation to Clive.

"Shall you take a lantern?" he asked after a pause, trying not to speak in a whisper.

"Shall we, Ru?" said Madge in an exact imitation of his breathless tones.

"I do not see why we should not," answered Rupert. "We should work all the faster, and the coast is clear. If you are ready, I'll fetch the picks and shovels, Madge, while you get the light!"

For about ten minutes Clive was left alone to his own reflections. Then Madge appeared with a small shawl tied over her hair and a smoky lantern in her hand.

"This way, please, Mr. Clive," she said. "It is a miserably cold night. If it were not for father's being so comfortably out of the way, I should advise leaving the ab—I mean putting off our search for a night or two."

"It is cold," agreed Clive, with a shudder, as they shut the door and began to grope their way to the chapel.

"Hold the lantern steady, Madge," cried Rupert as a sharp gust nearly put the light out. "It will seem lighter when our eyes get used to it. Here, Hal, give me your hand. I know every foot of these ruins by night as well as by day. You are sure you would not rather we left it for to-night?"

Madge turned with a laugh to say, "Do go back, Mr. Clive, if you wish! It is a horrid night."

That laugh settled the matter. "No," said Clive firmly, "I would not go back for anything, if Rupert will come on; but it certainly is not suitable work for a lady. I should advise *you* to go back, Mistress Margery."

"Yes, and have the abbot paying of a visit to me in the parlor all by myself! Doubtless he'll wander all over the place to-night, when he is disturbed! No, thank you, Mr. Clive. I can stand anything in good company, but alone I am not so sure."

"Here we are," said Rupert; and throwing down his tools, and taking the lantern from Margery, he hung it on the projecting point of an old carved archway that had once been a door but had been bricked up years before the siege of the house.

The old horn lantern threw an uncertain glimmer on the cracked tombstone immediately below it, but in the rest of the chapel seemed but to render "darkness visible." Even Margery was silent while Rupert forced a huge crowbar under one corner of the stone; and afterwards the hardness of their task left little breath for talking. Their united strength was barely sufficient to upheave the broken stone from its position. The first piece was the hardest to move, as the others wedged it tight. When it was out they sat down

to rest for a moment before going on with their work. The grave seemed to be lined all round with masonry and filled up with earth.

"Are you ready to try again?" said Rupert at last, and his voice made both his companions start. "I am afraid of our taking cold sitting here."

They rose in silence. The sharp sound of the iron tools as they clinked against the stonework was most unpleasantly loud and distinct in the darkness; and Margery began to wish that they had not been so careful to choose a time for their work when they were probably the only human beings within a circuit of a mile.

It cost nearly an hour's hard work to remove enough of the stone from the top of the grave to allow them to work with the shovels, but they fancied that their task had taken at least double that time. Scarcely a foot below the surface of the loose earth Clive's spade struck something hard and hollow-sounding.

"Rupert," he said, "come here! Listen!"

"Perhaps it's a coffin," suggested Margery.

Rupert did not say a word, but began to dig fiercely. Presently the corner of what looked like a great old box strongly bound with iron became visible; and Madge, getting out of the grave, relieved her feelings by executing a kind of war dance among the stones beside it.

"Whatever it may be, it is not a coffin, Mistress

Madge," remarked Harold as a second corner came to view. Two minutes later the whole top was uncovered.

"'T is great enough to contain treasure sufficient to rebuild the abbey from top to bottom," exclaimed Madge. "Could we not get it out without more digging?"

"No," said Rupert; "I cannot even shake it. Hand me that bar, Madge, please!"

"I cannot understand it," he exclaimed after some minutes had elapsed. "It seems to be mighty deep. I cannot find the bottom to get the bar under it.

"Let us try to open it where it stands," suggested Madge.

"Look at the lock," said Clive. "It is strong enough for a dungeon."

"It is a good three centuries since the abbot died," replied Madge. "The iron must be something rusty. Mayhap we can force it open. Could we not knock off the hinges?"

Madge was right; the iron was indeed rusty and the wood rotten, and a few good blows forced off the first hinge.

"Margery, will you hold the lantern?" said Rupert. "I cannot see where to strike!"

The second hinge was obstinate, but at length it gave way with a crack. Rupert wrenched back the great lid, and the light of Margery's lantern fell on nothing but black emptiness!

The three looked at one another in dismay, and then again into the depths of the abbot's strange chest. Margery knelt down beside it and leaning over held the lantern at the full extent of her arm; but it showed nothing but emptiness and darkness still. Clive caught her other hand, for in her eagerness to fathom the mystery she was almost overbalancing herself. "Beware, Margery!" he cried, "'t is bottomless, I doubt. Who knoweth what may lie down there?"

A damp and musty smell was rising from the opening, and Clive said slowly, "Had we not better go within, and leave further search till day-break?"

"Stay one moment, Mr. Clive! Who hath a piece of cord?"

"There is a rope in the cow shed," said Rupert. "Give me the lantern, Madge;" and in an instant he was off, leaving them in total darkness beside that horrid place.

"Where are you, Mr. Clive?" said Margery in a subdued tone, after a pause. "Do not move; you might fall over those hateful stones! It was something unkind of Rupert to leave us thus."

"Here I am, Mistress Madge," replied Clive in a voice that trembled with cold or for some other reason. "Take my hand, if you feel frightened."

Margery took it, both for his sake and her own; but it was so cold and trembling that she would have felt more courageous without it.

Fortunately Rupert returned before their courage had quite ebbed away, with a long rope tied to the handle of the lantern, and a ladder on his shoulder. "Sure now," he said, "we shall make shift to find the bottom."

"If there be one!" remarked Clive.

As the lantern swung over the hole, its dull beams fell on rough stonework, and Madge said in a disappointed tone, "I am frightened, Ru, lest it should be an old well, and not the abbot's chest after all."

"Nay!" replied Rupert, "the lantern is safe on the bottom now. It must be ten or twelve feet deep. Now for my ladder. Clive, draw the light up a little, so that I may see what I am about!"

Margery helped him to let his ladder down, but just as they got it into position a curious noise sounded from below. There was no mistake about it; they all heard it.

"Listen, Ru!" cried Madge. "Go not down; you will be buried alive!"

"It was only something falling," replied Rupert.

"What? Methinks it must be the abbot!" faltered Clive.

"Look!" said Rupert; "at times the light gleams on something small and square down yonder. Let me once get that, and we will leave the rest till morning."

Rupert climbed down the ladder, but as he reached the bottom he uttered a startled exclamation.

tion, and a second later there was a heavy rattle as if part of the wall had given way.

"What hath happened, Ru?" cried Madge. "Oh, do come up at once!"

"I am coming. Hold the light steady, Clive! Hurrah! here's the abbot's store at last."

Madge was on her knees, leaning over the edge of the hole trying to see what Rupert had found, when Clive caught her arm in an almost convulsive grasp, and in a breathless whisper said the one word, "*Look!*"

The girl did look, and her blood ran cold. Opposite her, in shadowy outline against the chapel wall, stood a tall figure wrapped in a dark robe. Its head, covered with the semblance of a cowl, was bowed upon its breast; its white bony hands were crossed in the attitude of penitence, and involuntarily Margery exclaimed, "*The abbot!*"

The specter, if specter it were, seemed to be disturbed by these low-uttered words. It raised its head, pointed one long arm towards them and one towards the dark pit, and came full two paces nearer. Madge shrieked, and Clive sprang backwards, still clinging to the rope that held the light. In his haste he fell over a heap of stones and let the lantern go with a crash that dashed it to pieces at Rupert's feet.

"What is it?" he cried in horror; but Harold made no answer and Margery only continued to utter most appalling shrieks as she fled towards

the house. She reached the door, but shame for her cowardice overcame her. She, who had laughed at Clive's fears, had basely left both him and Rupert to their fate.

She turned back, only to lose her way among the ruins in her horrible fear of meeting the abbot, and when at last she reached the scene of the disaster Rupert had contrived to escape from his dark prison and was bending anxiously over Clive, who lay senseless where he had fallen.

"Help me to carry him in!" said Rupert briefly. "God grant he be not dead!"

Margery obeyed, but could not help looking anxiously over her shoulder as she walked, so that more than once she ran against the wall or stumbled over a stone.

They laid Clive gently on the floor with a cushion under his head, shut the shutters, and lighted three or four candles, and by the time that Rupert had found a bottle of wine Harold had opened his eyes.

"Have you received any hurt?" said Rupert.

"No, no!" replied Clive a little wildly. "Where is Margery? Is she safe?"

"Yes, Harold; I am here. Drink some of this; it will do you good! I am going to make some hot bread and milk; mother says something hot often prevents one catching cold."

"Do, Margery; I will fetch the milk and the kettle in here, as the kitchen fire is nearly out,"

said Rupert. "It is well-nigh midnight, and I am hungry."

"Margery, did he see it?" asked Clive.

"I don't know. Don't talk of it, Harold. Let us forget it."

"I shall think of it, if I do not speak of it. Oh, the touch of his cold, damp hand will haunt me to my dying day!"

"The touch, Harold!" exclaimed Margery, thinking the lad was confused in his mind by his fright.

"Yes, Madge. Did you not see him bend over me and lay his hand on me?"

"When, Harold?" said Margery with a shiver.

"I don't know—before I swooned. I was trying to rise, and the ab—*it* touched me, and I fell back again!"

"Oh, Harold, how horrible!"

"Now, Margery," said Rupert, coming in at that moment, "let us talk of something different. It is useless to keep thinking of that old tale—we shall never sleep this night."

"I promise you I shall not try, Ru. I should only dream of it," said Margery.

"Rupert, did you not see it?" asked Clive, under his breath.

"No, Harold; I saw nothing; and you know if the abbot had really come, he would certainly have come to me, down in his grave!"

"But, Rupert, Madge saw it too. Did you not hear her shrieking?"

"Yes; I heard that. I daresay they heard her at Denham; but I did not *see* anything. I do think, for mine own part, that you two saw the abbot because you had expected to see him!"

"O Ru," cried Madge indignantly, "I never did expect to see him; I only talked of him to tease. Well, I really do beg your pardon, Harold, because you were right after all, and we never ought to have got you into this scrape."

"Rupert, I saw him with mine own eyes, and his hand touched me," said Clive solemnly; "so I am bound to believe that I have indeed seen him."

Rupert still imprudently tried to argue the matter; but, as he might have expected, neither Madge nor Harold was to be convinced. Both answered all his suggestions and speculations with "Rupert, we *saw* him. No amount of talking will alter that."

At last he let the subject drop and devoted himself to a serene enjoyment of his well-earned bowl of bread and milk, and when supper was finished he brought out his father's old Bible and read a chapter. Then they knelt down together while he asked for a blessing on them through the night. Soon afterwards Madge went to her own little room, though she declared she could never sleep, and Rupert and Clive lay down on rugs before the fire within call of her, for nothing would have induced Harold to spend the night next to the haunted chapel.

Madge rose as soon as the first faint glimmer of light shone in the east, and found Rupert already awake. He followed her to the kitchen, and said, "Don't let us talk of our adventure before Harold just yet, Margery; we never ought to have allowed him to come. But I have something to say to you."

"What, Ru? Did you find anything worth?"

"I trust so. It was a little chest well bound up and heavy; but I deny not that I was something startled by your shrieks and the fall of the lantern, and I let it drop. I was frightened lest some ill had befallen you, but in mine haste I groped round and round yon dark hole before I could find my ladder."

"O Ru, it was a shame to desert you. I am truly grieved at my cowardice!"

"When I reached the top I could see nothing, but I had not gone two yards ere I stumbled over poor Hal. Methought at first he was dead!"

"What do you mean to do now, Ru?"

"I am going to see whether my find be worth the trouble of bringing home or no. We were fools not to do our work by daylight."

"Shall you tell father?"

"I know not what we had best do. Harold is fast asleep. Will you come with me?"

"What a long way it seemed in the dark last night!" said Margery. "I doubt we shall have to tell father whether we wish or not, for he will be sure to see what we have been doing."

"I know not. Even if we tell him, I shall strive to hide the traces of our search, or we shall have all the rude fellows for miles around coming a-treasure-seeking."

The cold gray light of the winter morning was scarcely less dreary than the black darkness of the previous night, and Madge looked into the hole with an uncomfortable suspicion that the abbot might be at the bottom of it. "Rupert," she said, "it likes me ill to have you go down there. I fear some hurt will overtake you."

"I am frightened of nothing but the walls giving way, Madge, and I will take good heed not to press against them."

So saying he descended the ladder and was almost lost to sight in the shadows that hid the bottom of the pit. For a second or two there was silence and Margery waited in painful suspense. Suddenly Rupert uttered a joyous shout: "Margery! Margery! run for a candle, my dear. Broad pieces are scattered on the floor as thick as daisies in spring, but I have not light to gather them up."

Madge forgot the abbot now, and ran for the candle and a tinder box in great excitement. She was even bold enough to descend into the grave herself, but Rupert, hearing her hasty footsteps on the ladder, begged her to come no lower. "If you hold the light there, Madge, I can see nobly," he said; so she sat on a rung of the ladder halfway

down, holding the candle, while Rupert gathered gold and silver pieces from the floor and put them into her apron, for the little chest had smashed to pieces in its fall.

"Did you make that great dinge in the wall yonder?" asked Margery.

"Yes; the stones there are mighty loosely set. Well, methinks I have got all that is worth bringing away. Give me the candle, Madge, in case you should drop any of the treasure in going up. Shall I bring up this broken chest?"

"Mayhap father would like to see it."

They had very little idea of the value of their find, but as neither of them had ever seen so much money together at one time before, they felt amazingly rich. Clive was awake when they went in, and was much interested in all they told him, but evidently had an objection to touching the pieces.

"Why, Harold, sure these are solid enough," said Rupert, ringing one on the table as he spoke. "There is nothing ghostly about them."

"Nevertheless I would rather go poor all my days than use that money," he said.

"Ah, but that is because you know not what it is to be poor," exclaimed Madge quickly. "I deny not that I was something frightened by the abbot, but I dread still more that father should have to spend the rest of his days in jail. Oh, I hope this will save him!"

By the time that Sir John's coach returned with Mr. and Mrs. Staynor, Rupert had managed to reduce the abbot's grave to its old appearance. He had nailed down some rough boards in place of the trapdoor, had filled in the earth again, and had arranged the broken stone on the top as much as possible in its former position ; but it had proved to be like a puzzle, and had been much easier to break up than it was to put together again. To hide all deficiencies he had heaped over it a quantity of broken stones ; but by the time his labors were finished he was so stiff and tired he could scarcely move.

Happily Clive did not seem to be seriously the worse for his fright ; but his melancholy and dejected appearance acted as a continual reproach to his fellow conspirators, and neither of them was sorry when he rolled away in the great coach with its liveried servants and handsome horses. "It had been folly," they both agreed, "to ask one like him to join in the adventure."

CHAPTER X.

HENRY VII'S ANGELS.

IT was supper time on the following day. The table was set, and Mr. and Mrs. Staynor were waiting beside it; but Margery and Rupert had disappeared. A subdued sound of laughter was heard in the distance, to which the old man listened with a smile.

"It is full sweet to be young, my Catherine," he said. "Hearken! those children can scarce contain themselves for gladness, though they know that we can barely make shift to live from hand to mouth."

Mrs. Staynor listened with a frowning brow and a bright light in her dark eyes. "Richard, if they had their rights, they would have reason to be merry. Oh, it is bitter to be cast aside like a rusty and broken blade the instant our king needs not our services — after our great sacrifices too. At times methinks it had been better to have taken thought for our own and to have let the king stand or fall as it pleased heaven."

"Kate, my poor love, what hath happened? It is the first time I ever heard you grieve that you had given all to the king."

She did not answer. At that moment the door flew open and Madge entered, bearing on a tray, decently covered with a white cloth, the gold and silver pieces they had found. They had spent much time and thought in arranging them in a "noble and curious design," and Madge, making a sweeping courtesy as she advanced, went down on her knees to present them to her father. Alas! by one of those sad accidents to which she was peculiarly liable, she caught the edge of the tray on the corner of the table; and instead of the graceful presentation which was on the program the coins flew wildly into the air and descended in a gold and silver shower on the old man's white head. All thoughts of grace dismissed for the present, Margery dropped the empty tray with a clatter, and crawling under the table began to collect the scattered treasure, whilst her father and mother looked on in bewilderment.

At last the squire found his voice. "Rupert, my boy, what is this?" he inquired mildly, for Madge was out of sight under her mother's chair, whither she had pursued a refractory "angel."

"It is some treasure we sought and found," replied Rupert with modest pride.

"Treasure, my lad? Mine eyes tell me thus much; but how have you come by it?"

"Sir," said Rupert, who was busily counting the pieces, "be pleased to tarry for mine answer until we discover the last gold piece. I have been

telling of them, and there is one missing; then you shall have the relation in full." So saying, he joined his aunt under the table, and for the next five minutes their elders looked on in silent wonderment.

"I have it, Madge!" cried the lad at last. "Now tell grandfather all."

Nothing loath, the girl rose to her feet, her brown face flushed and her hair wilder than ever, and began: "You must know, father, that thoughts of the ghostly abbot and his hoard have haunted Ru and me for months. Before his sickness we had resolved to dig in the grave, but just as we had concluded to adventure on it Prince Rupert came hither and Ru went on that luckless errand. At last we could tarry no longer, and happily my Lady Elmer chanced to send her coach that very day to carry you to see Lord Brackenridge, so when night fell" —

"What!" cried Mr. Staynor good-humoredly, "when the cat's away the mice will play — eh, my dutiful daughter?"

"Yes, father," said Madge saucily. "We were frightened lest you should forbid the enterprise, or think us a pair of sad fools for our pains."

"So the long and the short of the matter is that you disturbed the poor old abbot's bones and possessed yourselves of his hoards?" said the squire, "and no doubt saw his ghost?"

"Yes, father; we did indeed," said Margery.

the color fading suddenly from her cheeks. "His head was bowed down on his breast and his hands crossed as the legend saith."

"I saw nothing," said Rupert; "neither the abbot nor yet his bones, and methinks that which they call his tomb is no true burial place. In the center under the stone is a wide round hole, much like a well that hath dried up. It was there we discovered the treasure in a small, iron-bound chest; but it fell and broke, so we gathered the coins into Madge's apron yesterday morning."

"Let me see them again, Rupert," said Mr. Staynor; and holding one of the coins near the light he examined it narrowly. "Methinks it is an angel of the time of Henry VII. It is strange why they should have been hidden in such a place. Perhaps it was during the disturbances and troubles of Mary's reign."

"Can it have been when the abbey was in the hands of mad Sir James?" suggested Rupert.

"Doubtless you are right, my boy," said the squire slowly. "I remember hearing wild tales of him in my boy's time from my grandfather, whose father had taken the property after him. In his youth Sir James was a most curious and understanding person (for his day) in all antiquities, and a great traveler moreover. He visited Italy and the Holy Land; nay, it was even said that he reached China itself; but whatever truth there was in that tale, he came home in a sad con-

dition. Some said his brain was bewildered by the heat of the sun ; others that he had drunk of some strange poison and was mazed thereby ; for ever afterward he was subject to fits of horrid melancholy. At these times a niggard spirit entered into him, and he would set himself to hide all his goods on which he could lay hands. At his death his cousin, my great-grandfather, found bags of gold up the great chimneys and under the floors ; but doubtless he never thought to search the abbot's grave."

"I am right glad of it," said Madge. "If he had had a mind to hide away ten times so great a store, I would not have blamed him ; but, father, what is the worth of our treasure ?"

"Some three hundred pounds, perhaps, more or less. I cannot say."

"Well," said Margery with a deep-drawn sigh, "it is better than nothing."

"Certainly, my daughter ; what will you do with it ? 'T is many a year since this poor house hath been tempting to robbers, but it is scarce prudent to leave this so openly on the table."

"Lock it up, grandfather, in your strong box," said Rupert, "and do with it as you will."

Both he and Margery felt amply rewarded for their toils and their alarms when they saw what a load this unexpected supply had lifted from the squire's shoulders. He told old stories, begged for old songs, and was the gayest of the party ;

but before they went to rest that night he did not forget to thank the God of all grace for this most strangely vouchsafed mercy.

"I wish we had kept Mr. Clive," said Margery, lingering after prayers for a moment with her arm about her father's neck. "You know he helped us to dig up the chest; but he was so distressed and amazed when he caught sight of the abbot that he fainted, and Ru and I had to carry him in."

"Methinks, Aunt Margery," said Rupert quietly, "I could have found it in mine heart to wish that you also had fainted in your dismay rather than have uttered so horrid shrieks. I thought nothing less than that some ill-disposed wretch was endeavoring to murder you."

"Ah, it is easy for those to talk who have seen nothing," said Margery, blushing a little nevertheless. "I know I contemned and despised Mr. Clive for his fears, but I am now sensible of my folly, as Rupert himself may be ere long."

"Poor little Margery!" said the squire, gently patting the girl's head; "it is vain, I know full well, to argue with one in your case. Some day, I trust, you will learn enough of the workings of the mind and imagination to understand how that may appear to the eyes that hath no existence in fact. Till then, my love, try to rest yourself on the deep love and all-embracing power of God,

and remember that all the spirits, whether good or evil, are subject unto him."

"But, sir," said Rupert, "it seems to me improbable that the abbot would rather appear to them than to me, for it was I who had invaded his treasure-house."

"Nay, Rupert," said Mr. Staynor, smiling; "granting that the abbot walketh the earth now-days, I must profess myself unable to account for his tastes and the manner of his rendering of himself visible. Was Harold much frightened?"

"Yes, sir; he fainted. The engaging of him in the business was rank folly."

"It was, indeed, Rupert," said the squire gravely. "He hath not strength to endure so great a shock. I have known men hurt for life by less."

"I was most to blame, father. I would tease him about his faint-heartedness till he was ashamed to stay away," said Margery penitently.

"Ay, Margery, I have been grieved to see it. It is an ill thing when a woman useth her wit to drive her friends into folly; and I trust that my little maid will never again be so carried away of lightness and vanity."

"Father, I meant no harm," said Margery, hanging her head to hide her hot cheeks.

"My child, I know that full well, and I should be truly proud of my Margery were she something less thoughtless in her mirth;" and the squire ended his little lecture with a kiss.

Sir James' treasure, as they now called it, paid more than one of the squire's most pressing debts, for it proved to be worth very nearly four hundred pounds. For a short season unwonted prosperity reigned in the ruined abbey, and Mr. Staynor was free to devote his attention to the metals and the stars, undistracted by the clamors of impatient creditors.

"Doth it not seem strange," said Margery one breezy March morning, three weeks after the great discovery, "that Harold's ghost story put us upon the finding of that long-hidden treasure? How oddly things came about! Mayhap many an one since the gold was buried would have been happy enough to bring it to the light; but me-thinks scarce any can have needed it more grievously than we!"

"No," said Rupert; "God knew and God cared for our distress, and he laid it up for us against the time when it should be most needed."

"Father seems as light-hearted as a boy since this hath chanced. Oh, I would that there were some way of our helping him continuously!"

"Let us trust in God, Margery. He will show us what to do."

"If Sir James was used thus to hide away his gold," suggested Margery after a pause, "it is likely that there are other hoards of his yet undiscovered."

"Perhaps there may be," answered Rupert

thoughtfully. "Methinks it might be worth searching under the floor of the great hall, or in the walls of some of the chambers."

Margery agreed, and for the next few days they spent all the time they could spare from their usual tasks in digging trenches in various likely and unlikely places ; but if Sir James had buried any more of his wealth, they were unfortunate in not finding the right spot. Next, growing weary of so much labor with picks and shovels, they took to a mason's hammer, tapping the old walls from top to bottom, to the great peril of their necks, and breaking holes wherever the stonework sounded hollow. Alas ! they gained nothing from all their toil but blistered hands and aching backs.

When Sunday came after a week of this severe labor they were glad to lay by their tools, though they were not too tired to go to church as usual ; for even Mrs. Staynor, in spite of her ill health, could manage to walk so far whenever the weather was fine. A large old-fashioned square pew was still appropriated to their use, and was almost the only remaining mark of the dignified position they had once held in the neighborhood ; for now that they came to worship on foot, in threadbare and faded garments, the bows and courtesies of their sometime dependents were more familiar and less deep than they had been in the days when Mrs. Staynor first came to dwell among them in the pride of her wealth and beauty. It was only her

sense of duty, and the rigidity of the laws, that brought her there Sunday after Sunday ; for it was a weekly humiliation to her to thus exhibit her poverty to all the world, and the service gave her little comfort. She joined indeed in the beautiful old prayers with her lips ; but her heart was filled with unavailing regrets for the past, and, though she never acknowledged it even to herself, a bitter feeling that God had acted harshly toward her and those she loved shut out the sense of his love.

With her husband it was different. When he entered the little dimly lighted church, it was as if he were passing into the presence of the Highest. His earthly sorrows and perplexities fell out of sight, and for the sacred hour of service he communed with God, like Moses of old, and rarely failed to come out into the sunshine strengthened and refreshed for his toilsome journey towards the Holy City. For him the gray old curate, long past the strength and passion of life, always had a message from the Master. To Margery his slow monotonous utterances were as severe a trial of patience as the unceasing clatter of the cowbells on the common ; and even to Rupert, though since his illness he had listened with reverent attention, the sermon seemed often cold and meaningless ; but to the squire God spake through his dull old servant's lips wondrous lessons of patience and comfort and charity.

Mr. Staynor always left the church immediately after the benediction with his wife leaning on his arm; but the young folk often lingered in the porch to speak to Lady Elmer.

On this Sunday she and her brother were alone, but that was nothing new, for Sir John had not attended church for several months. Clive looked pale and tired, and Madge asked after his health rather anxiously, for it was the first time she had seen him since their treasure-digging exploits.

"I am quite well, Mistress Margery," he replied. "May I have the pleasure of walking with you some portion of your way? Edith hath a message from John to Rupert, so the coach must needs wait, and I have somewhat to say to you of great importance. Stay! I will tell Edith that we are going on, and ask her to bid the man drive after us."

The congregation was gathered in knots in the graveyard, some discussing the sermon, and others a bull-baiting that was to take place on the green in the afternoon.

"How they talk!" said Clive with disgust as he moved slowly down the narrow walk with Margery on his arm, scarcely deigning to acknowledge the villagers' humble salutations. "Of all rude and nasty pleasures, methinks bull-baiting is the worst. Really at times one is fain to think mankind not so far higher than the beasts that perish as the parsons would make us believe."

"You are the last person I should have expected to claim kindred with the beasts," said Margery, laughing. "Sure you poets see life in a mighty strange light!"

"Nay, Mistress Madge, a truce to your mirth! Now we may speak without being overheard. Hath Rupert told you that he goes at times to the forbidden meetings of the Nonconformists?"

"Yes; he hath been twice or thrice, that is all."

"Well, John hath sent him a message to-day to go with him on Wednesday to a conventicle in the woods south of Horton. A great preacher, one Master Day, a tailor by trade" (Harold spoke of him with the utmost contempt) "is to hold forth, as they call it, and will no doubt give them 'a most sweet and moving discourse.' John is crazy over him—I can call it nothing less—and besought Edith so earnestly to deliver his message to Rupert that she at length consented. For mine own part I declined openly to do his errand."

"Wherefore, Mr. Clive?"

"Nay, fair Mistress Margery, call me Harold as you did the other night. I would not do John's bidding because I hold 't is playing no friendly part to Rupert to lead him into danger. These secret meetings are straitly forbidden—more's the pity if any one careth to go to them!—and sooner or later they who attend them will suffer for their folly. There are hundreds in prison even now for like offenses."

"What can I do? Rupert was begging me this morning to go with him to hear their preachers."

"For the sake of your father and mother, Madge, do no such thing. It is more than likely that the government will endeavor to make an end of this nest of schismatics when this man Day cometh amongst them. I tell you, they are known and watched. I know it of a certainty. John is not to be moved by entreaties or persuasions. Even Edith can do nothing with him now; but that is no reason that Rupert should be undone also. Beg him to abide at home on Wednesday, Margery, and if that do not avail, desire your father to command him to stay."

"I fear he will have promised my Lady Elmer even now to go," said Madge.

"John should be ashamed of himself!" said the young man impatiently. "I have been cruelly put out with him. I spoke with some heat to him last night on the baseness of leading a boy like Rupert into so great folly; but all he would say was, 'I dare not tempt Rupert to choose carnal comfort and security rather than the weal of his immortal soul!' It is vain to waste words on John when he hath made up his mind."

"Suppose he chanceth to be right?" said Margery meditatively.

"Margery, three months ago John himself was mighty tender of his own carnal security. It is

all the fault of that arch-fanatic Kenrick. I would to heaven that he were safely clapped up in jail out of the way!"

"Methinks it would like me well to go to one of these meetings just to see so strange a sight as it must be!"

"It is not at all pleasing, Margery. I went once at John's desire, and wished myself well home, I can tell you. Of singing of long psalms and making of longer prayers there was no end, but the preaching was infinitely worse. I never heard so mean a sermon. The fellow mispronounced every third word, yet John well-nigh wept to hear him; and coming away he must needs fall a-preaching at me, while all the rest stood round to hear. I never suffered such impudence before; but John was angered that I took it ill."

"These folk have no respect for people of condition," said Madge. "That shoemaker Kenrick fell to admonishing and reproving of me. It is not to be borne with. I am frightened lest Rupert betake himself to their distasteful ways."

"Well, Margery, let him not go on Wednesday, and mayhap we shall have the comfort of hearing that good Master Kenrick and the rest are laid by the heels."

"It shall not be my fault if he doth. Look! the coach is close at hand."

A moment later it drew up beside them.

Rupert alighted, and Clive, after kissing Margery's hand, took his place beside his sister.

"Edith," he asked anxiously, "is Rupert going?"

"He says so, Harold."

"Why doth not John leave him in peace? Surely that family hath enough to endure without our adding to its troubles."

"Indeed, Harold, I am grieved for them; but I know not whether John be not right. Rupert is much improved of late. To-day he talked to me as gravely and sweetly of God's good mercy as I have not often heard the like."

"Of course you think John right, Edith; but if Rupert runs obstinately into this danger, I say he will be wronging of those who depend on him for daily food. His grandfather is a right noble Christian gentleman, but *he* doth not think it needful to go after strange doctrines."

"Well, Harold, it would content me better if neither John nor Rupert ran into this danger; but they must judge for themselves."

"Edith," said her brother after a long pause, "it hath but now occurred to me — might not we do somewhat to help the Staynors? I wonder if my guardians could be persuaded to let me lend Mr. Staynor the money? or would not John do it?"

"I know not whether John could, and I doubt that my Lord Enderby would not permit you to

risk your money with such slender prospect of repayment as I fear there is."

"I shall be of age soon; sure he could not refuse a request so reasonable. Hitherto he hath rightly permitted me to use mine own as I chose."

"Yes; but Mr. Staynor's debts are so great. I fear, from what Rupert hath said, it would take many hundreds of pounds to clear him; but we must talk to John. Nothing would make me happier than to see them established in comfort again. I am persuaded that we have done them no wrong, but it likes me ill to be in possession of what once was theirs, while they suffer so great privations."

"Whatever we do must needs be done in haste, for Rupert says that his grandfather lives in constant apprehension of arrest."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SERVICE IN THE WOOD.

FATHER," exclaimed Margery, following him up to his favorite room in the tower on the Wednesday morning, "Rupert is determined to go to-night to a meeting in the woods with Sir John Elmer. I have been talking with him for an hour, but I can make neither sense nor reason of him. He persists that he must go."

"Well, my child, he hath been before and returned safely."

"But, father, Harold Clive declares that the fanatics are being watched, and that he certainly expects many will be taken to-night."

"Wherefore, Margery, doth he particularly expect ill to-night? Hath he received information of danger?"

"He did not tell me, father, how he knew; he only bade me by all means prevent Ru's going if I could. Father, will not you command him to stay within to-night?"

"My daughter, Rupert hath so long done a man's part in toil and thought for our welfare, I like not to lay strait commands on him as if he

were a child. Have you not shown him what Harold told you?"

"Yes, father; and he says Harold is ever frightened of dangers that are not."

"Well, I will talk to him and bid him be careful. But methinks he is right; young Clive lacks courage, and fancies danger in everything."

Margery went to her work in bitter disappointment, for something in Clive's manner had impressed her strongly, and she feared that Rupert would suffer for his rashness. Mr. Staynor spoke to him and bade him be careful, but left him free to go or stay, as he judged best; and soon after dusk he kissed his grandmother, bade Margery good-by, and set out on his long, dark walk to the secret meeting place.

On this occasion the worshipers met in the open air, in a sheltered wood a mile from the village of Horton. The time appointed for beginning was later than usual, for they took care to change the hour of service as often as the place. The gathering was smaller and the impression of impending danger seemed to be on all. Special precautions were taken to prevent surprise, and to Rupert's disappointment it fell to his lot to watch the path through the wood near where it joined the highway. He was chosen as sentinel at the instance of his friend Obadiah, who declared that his quickness of sight and hearing rendered him especially suitable for the post. Of course it was

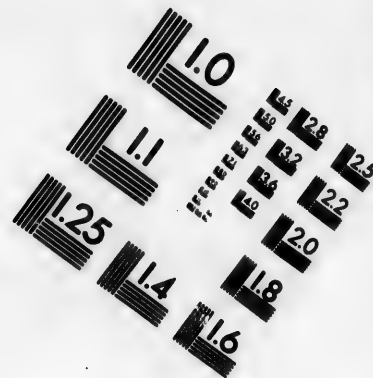
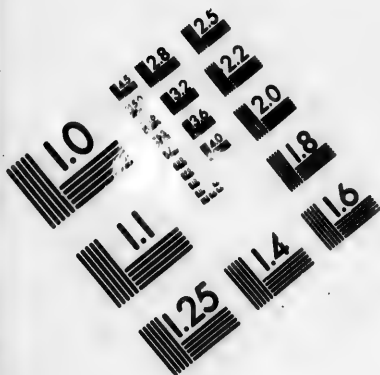
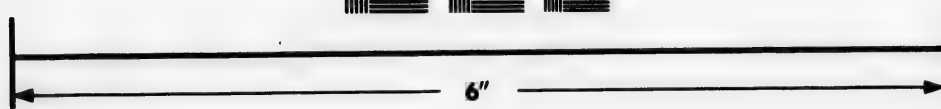
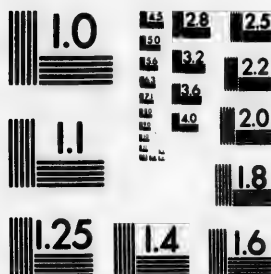


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86
87
88
89
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91
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98
99

gratifying that he should so soon have gained the good opinion of his fellow worshipers; but his long watch was dreary enough, and he felt it hard that he who had come so many weary miles on foot to join in the service should be shut out from its privileges.

Now and then the words of a psalm floated to him on the chill air of the dark April evening, but neither prayer nor preaching reached him. The distant murmurs made him feel all the more lonely in his solitary watch as he paced backward and forward on the narrow path, for he durst not try to listen to them, lest he should not hear the sounds of approaching danger.

An hour had gone by and Rupert's overstrained faculties had begun to grow dull and heavy, when suddenly something startled him, and, fully awake once more, he drew cautiously out of the glimmering moonlight into the dark shadow of a tree. A stealthy tread sounded on the path, and an instant later a tall slight figure crossed a faint beam of light. Rupert sprang forward, and in the wild impulse of the moment flung himself upon the newcomer, grappled with and threw him to the ground, and then asked, last of all, the question he should have asked at first:—

“Who are you?”

The gasping lad, whom he was holding down beneath the weight of his knees, found no breath to answer, and Rupert, contrite and ashamed,

began to fear that he had "set upon" one of the faithful who had been prevented attending the service more punctually. Under this new impression, he assisted him to rise with the same suddenness with which he had overthrown him, and, brushing the dust off his clothes, repeated more civilly: "Fair sir, who are you?"

"You are Rupert?" was the unexpected reply, made in a strangely familiar tone. "You 'professors' are something hasty at times, methinks; but let that pass. If I had recognized you before, I would have come openly to you. It is you I am seeking."

"Harold Clive!" cried Rupert in surprise. "What brings you hither?"

"I learned by chance of pressing danger (tomorrow I'll tell you how), and being at the Rose and Crown when you passed through the village, I guessed that you had been deaf to Margery's warnings. The constables are on the road hither even now. Save yourself, Rupert. Take the road toward Altrincham; you cannot go through Horton now. Make haste; but where is John? Edith will never forgive me if he is taken."

"Nay, Clive; let me go! there is no time to spare. Where were the constables?"

"I left them drinking at the inn; but there is not a minute to spare. Methinks I hear their voices even now. I will give the warning, Rupert."

"No, Harold ; they trusted me. I would not for the world even seem to betray them. Besides, it is not safe for you."

"Rupert," said Harold, clinging to his arm, "I am in no danger ; but you are. What would they do if you were taken ? Go, and let me warn John and the others !"

"I dare not, Harold," replied Rupert, shaking off his hand somewhat roughly. "I do thank you, Harold, truly, but I dare not wait. Shall I tell Sir John to make toward Altrincham ?"

"Ay ; if you will. Hark ! I hear horse-hoofs on the road ! I am grieved I wasted my pains on you, if you are determined to be caught. Good-night !"

Harold disappeared, and Rupert rushed through the wood to give the alarm, blaming himself that he had delayed so long. Mr. Day had not reached the end of his discourse, but in less than five minutes the congregation had dispersed, some hiding in the woods and some hastening along the roads toward their homes. The noisy shouting and swearing of the constables and their assistants gave warning of their approach long before they reached the meeting place, for they had stayed drinking in Horton till most of them were far from sober.

Rupert and Obadiah, who had escaped together, lay concealed in a ditch behind a hedge while the whole cavalcade passed by. They were so close

that they could see their faces in the moonlight, and in the young leader of the band Rupert recognized with a start the features of a friend of Clive's. A painful suspicion crossed his mind, but he put it away from him with horror.

"Satan divided against himself cannot stand," muttered Kenrick with a grim smile. "Truly the devil hath overreached himself in making his ministers drunk with wine. They will be cruelly troubled to keep their feet among the trees, and are doubtless something blind and deaf as well. None of the faithful will be taken this night. Come, let us go our ways; we may safely adventure ourselves now on the highroad."

Kenrick was so convinced of the ineffectiveness of the officers sent against them that he made little haste. "They were fools to put such a prating coxcomb as that young Lilley in charge!" he remarked after a while. "He hath neither wit nor prudence, and thinketh of naught but how he may deck out his poor, vile, dying body with gauds and frippery. By the way, is he not well acquainted with thy friend, Harold Clive?"

"He hath some acquaintance with him," admitted Rupert reluctantly.

"I thought as much. Mr. Clive and he were drinking together in the window of that haunt of iniquity, the Rose and Crown tavern, this very evening. I saw them from my window ere I set forth."

"Harold Clive was never the worse for strong drink in his life," said Rupert indignantly. "He saith it is a brutal habit, unworthy of a gentleman."

"Nevertheless, my son, he was pledging Lilley deep enough to-night. Had it not been for having this business of godly Mr. Day in hand, I would have gone in to them, and warned them of their sin and folly. Doubtless it is to him, and no other, we owe to-night's disturbance, and if I were thee, Rupert, I would never more call myself his friend. His professed affection for thee will prove but like the kiss of Judas, for his heart is filled with hate and treachery."

"Master Kenrick, you do him sore wrong. He is of a most true and noble spirit."

"I saw him to-night, Rupert, riding off towards Horton as the constables came up. It is he and no other who hath betrayed us. Surely if I had had a pistol at hand, I should have judged it right to send a shot through him; but he will not escape, for the Lord hath sworn to be avenged upon his enemies."

"Nay, you know not Clive. He came to warn me to escape."

"Ay; perchance the love he witnesseth for you may not be wholly feigned; but did he not at the same time bid thee to make off silently and secretly, and leave the poor oppressed people of God to their fate?"

"No," said Rupert triumphantly; "he said not a word of secrecy. He bade me make haste, and offered to warn the rest himself."

"Well, that showeth nothing and is neither here nor there. Some one hath betrayed us, and who so likely as he, who hath discovered so bitter a hatred to the ways of truth and holiness, and hath so ready means of learning of our intended meeting places?"

"What do you mean?"

"Doth not Sir John Elmer hear of our plans? and doubtless he telleth his wife, the malignant's daughter, and she telleth her brother. Were it not that Sir John showeth so earnest desires to throw off the galling yoke of the flesh, and to cast in his lot with the true Israel, it would have been but the part of prudence to hide from him our gathering places; but God forbid that we should put a stumblingblock before the feet of one of the babes in Christ! Nevertheless, henceforth we will require it of him to show our secret to no one, not even to the wife of his bosom, unless she giveth signal proof of being convicted of her sins and desiring to seek unto the Lord."

"But, Master Kenrick, you do not suppose that Mr. Clive would play the informer for the sake of the proffered reward? He hath so great wealth at his command that those few poor pounds would be nothing worth in his eyes, even were he ready to do so vile a thing."

"That is as it may be. They who have most of this world's goods are oftentimes so greedy to add to them that they are ready to sell their very souls for aught the devil will pay, be the price never so mean. But granted that young Clive be not tempted by the gold, thinkest thou, my son, that Satan's wit could devise no other trap? The lust of revenge is full as fierce a passion as the lust of gold."

"Master Kenrick, once again I must answer that I know Harold well, and a gentler and sweeter soul never dwelt in human frame. At times indeed it hath seemed to me that he is of too tender and delicate a mold to do a man's work in this rough world. It had been better for him had he been born a maid, for talk of war and bloodshed turns him faint, and though he knoweth all tricks of fence that may be learned of the court gallants in France as well as England, he loveth the pen far better than the sword."

"Ay, my son; and 't is just such an one who is readiest to play the traitor. A bold man will strive to slay his enemy in fair fight; but such a feeble, sickly lad as this Clive of thine must needs turn to cunning to be avenged on his foes."

"Indeed, you wrong him; besides, who amongst us hath offended him?"

"Thou wast not with us in the old barn two days after Christmas then?"

"No; my broken arm still kept me to the house."

"Sir John brought the young fellow in his company, and ere we parted, that saint in Israel, Mr. Joshua Fenchurch, addressed to him a few words of brotherly admonition. He had come to the assembly tricked out in lace and satin and shining trinkets of gold and gems, a very shame to be seen ; but many an one of our foolish damsels eyed his light vanities with fond admiration. Mine own heart was burning to show him the things profitable to his eternal peace ; but while I waited the spirit of prophecy came on our beloved brother Joshua, and with godly zeal he discovered to him the folly of thus bedizening what shall soon be food for worms, while grievously neglecting of his soul. He read to him the apostle Peter's holy admonitions to the gracious women of old, concerning their outward adornment, — of wearing of gold and putting on of apparel, — and entreated him even with tears to strive rather for the pearl of great price. But the young man turned a deaf ear to his exhortations and heaped on him reproaches without measure, calling of him evil names, such as 'fool' and 'prating hypocrite' ! I was convinced he would not rest till he had done us some foul wrong, and this evening's work hath justified my fears. None of our own company could have played the traitor."

"Till I have certain proof, Master Kenrick, I will never believe that Clive hath committed so great wickedness. He came for to give us warning !

Now good-night to you. I will strike home across the fields."

"Nay, my son; tarry at my poor house till day-break; then I will send thee away in peace."

"Thank you, Master Kenrick; I cannot. They will be troubled for my safety if I do not reach home ere midnight."

The following morning was dull and cloudy, but Madge had just set on the gruel and was stirring it over the fire when she saw Clive ride past the window and dismount in the yard. Hardly stopping to knock he opened the door and came in. "Is Rupert safe?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes, he is; thanks to you! It was truly noble of you to take such care for them when they would not heed your warnings. I trust that now Ru will see the error of his ways."

"I much doubt it, Margery; but as I lay awake last night a brave plan occurred to me for carrying of him away from these foolish fanatics for a season. I know not whether I have yet told you, but I needs must go up to London shortly; now wherefore should not Rupert bear me company?"

"Alas! it is a glorious scheme, but the expenses would be too great."

"Nay, but, Madge, I would gladly bear the charges for both, and I trust to you to set forth the matter to your father in such fashion that he will not refuse his consent."

"Indeed it would be the making of Ru. Who

knows but that he might get some officer's place in the fleet?"

"Yes, Margery; this war time is the very chance for him. Surely if he can but come at Prince Rupert I doubt not but he will make him lieutenant at the least, or mayhap captain, if he have good luck."

"If he went, could you contrive it, Harold, that he should have speech of the king?"

"Ay, Margery; that would take small contriving. I have already kissed the king's hand, but I would strive to have Rupert presented to him by some great lord. That once accomplished, he is free of Whitehall, and may see his majesty dance, drink, dine, or have his wig curled, as it pleaseth him. Methinks if Rupert have but common luck, he will have some place at court or be appointed to a ship ere the year be out."

"Indeed, Harold, I know not how we are to thank you for your wondrous kindness" —

"Never mind thanks, Madge; only get Rupert to come with me. I desire it full as much for mine own sake as his; and go I must whether I will or no — upon a mighty distasteful errand too."

"Hath your early ride given you hunger enough to relish a dish of milk and gruel, Harold?" asked Madge as she lifted her pot from the fire.

"I never enjoy aught I get at Cressley so well as your gruel, Madge," replied the young man with a bow.

"Ah, I perceive that you are practicing of your courtly compliments on me, that you may have a rich supply of fine speeches for the great ladies."

"I care naught for any court dame of them all, compared to you, Madge."

"Truly, Mr. Clive? but, surely, could you not put your pretty vanities into verse? Methinks they would appear excellently well in print, and they are but wasted on a simple country maid like me."

"Margery, when I come back you shall not thus laugh at me."

"Nay; I think not of laughing at you. Perchance you will rival great Mr. Dryden himself, and then all the world will know what sweet poetry you can write!"

"Methinks, Margery, your gruel is a-cooling while we linger here. Shall I carry it in?"

"Thank you; I will bring the milk and open the door for you."

They were hardly seated at breakfast when Clive propounded his scheme and eagerly asked Mr. Staynor's consent to it.

"Nay; indeed it would not be fair to put you to so heavy charges."

"O grandfather," began Rupert eagerly, "indeed if Harold will lend the money to me, I will repay it as soon as I can save it."

"Ay, that he can," cried Clive. "Now, sir, say yes to my scheme. Mrs. Staynor, entreat him

for us. Indeed, 't would be a kindness to me. I am so lonesome, — for John is something elderly and grave to be a brother to me, — and methinks it might be the making of Rupert."

"Give us time to consider of it, young sir. We all thank you for your generosity, but we must not be overhasty. Are you sure that your own business requires your journey, or is it solely to do us service?"

"Indeed, sir, my guardian hath commanded mine attendance on him," replied Clive; but he blushed so deeply that Madge, who had risen to give him a second supply of gruel, said softly, as she set his plate, "Call you not that poet's license, fair sir?"

"Can you not tarry to dine with us?" said the squire; "and you shall have our answer then. Doth Sir John know of your intended journey?"

"Yes, sir; and he greatly approveth of my asking Rupert to give me his company."

After breakfast Mr. Staynor called Rupert into his own room, and Clive with another blush said hastily, looking at Mrs. Staynor, "Methinks, madam, there is no reason wherefore I should not tell you of the cause for my Lord Enderby's peremptory commands to me to go up to London. It is simply a precious scheme of his and John's for wedding of me to the sole daughter and heiress of Earl Shirley."

"Ah, my Lady Elmer spoke once to me as if

you were soon to wed," said Mrs. Staynor. "I wish you all joy and happiness, and trust that your bride may be as good and fair as you deserve."

"Nay, dear lady, you are something too soon with your congratulations," replied Clive, half smiling but evidently rather annoyed. "My Lady Lillas is a pretty little maid enough, fair-haired and blue-eyed, but she is barely nine years old. I went to see her once to please my Lord Enderby and mighty frightened she was of me; perchance they had told her that they designed to marry her to me. I was but a boy then, and, little thinking how great a matter they were thus settling for me off-hand, I was content to do their will and to wed without delay. Happily the little lady's father was hard to please in the matter of the settlements, and we were not even affianced. Then I fell sick; but now my lord hath written me word that the matter is revived, and that my Lord Shirley showeth more readiness than formerly to settle all as he desires. Nought will serve but I must go to town to woo the bride whom he hath chosen for me."

"Sure she cometh of a great and noble family, and, if my memory serve me, they have ever been true and loyal," remarked Mrs. Staynor.

"Ay; my Lord Shirley swears that the king can do no wrong, and shuts his eyes to all the ill ways the court hath brought from abroad, because he

cannot allow that aught is sinful or hateful but rebellion. Between him and my Lord Enderby I shall have a right pleasant visit; but one thing I know, they shall not force nor persuade nor weary me into marrying of the little lady, for when I wed it shall be to a bride of mine own choice and with her own free will."

"A noble resolve, Mr. Clive," said Margery, laughing. "'T is high time to protest against the tyranny of your guardian."

"Methinks, Margery, Mr. Clive will scarce care for your opinion on this matter," said her mother reprovingly. "Go, carry away those things from the table."

Madge obeyed; but long before dinner time the lads sought her in the kitchen to tell her that the squire had consented to Rupert's going, and for the rest of the day they did little but discuss the proposed journey in all its bearings, and make wonderful plans for impressing the king with a proper sense of Mr. Staynor's long-disregarded services.

CHAPTER XII.

HIS MAJESTY.

HALLOO, Rupert! are you also buying of books?"

"Nay; I saw you within, and have been waiting here for full half an hour. Methought you would never have done turning over those dusty volumes."

"Where have you been, Ru?"

"Down to the victualing ships in the river with Mr. Poyser. He saith he will see that my letter to the prince miscarries not. Are you ready? Give me your books. It likes me better to have something to carry."

"Nay! you shall not be burdened with them. I love this place; yon old church looks down so grim and peaceful on all the hurry and bustle around it. Look! Paternoster Row is something more crowded than usual, despite this talk of the plague upon us. Perchance the ladies are laying in great store of silks and laces against their flight."

"Methinks they have already begun to fly, Harold. The streets are well-nigh choked with

coaches and wagons and servants. Are you tired? Shall I call a chair for you?"

With an air of disgust and weariness, Clive was picking his way slowly among the heaps of ashes and refuse that defiled the rough pavement, while loaded wagons and coaches rattled by, sometimes barely leaving room to pass, for there was no raised path for foot passengers then. He walked as little in London as he could help, preferring to travel either by coach or in a sedan chair, though the latter mode of progression had much amused Rupert.

"Indeed, Rupert, it is too hot to walk," he replied. "Some chairs would not come amiss, methinks; but I know not where we could get them at this end of the town."

"I had rather travel afoot any day, Hal, than be shut in one of those little boxes and be borne along like an infant in arms. You know I made trial of it the other night to please you; but if you choose to get one, I will walk alongside, for I am not weary."

"Look! there is an empty coach," said Clive as they turned into Fleet Street. "I trust you will condescend to bear me company in that."

There were no windows to the vehicle, but air and light were admitted in bad weather through spaces closed by panels, and the lads, who were never weary of the strange sights and sounds of the city, leaned out to watch the passing crowds.

The scene that met their eyes was as unlike modern London as that is unlike Jerusalem or Canton. Tall, irregularly built, many-gabled houses of wood and plaster with projecting bulkheads darkened the ill-paved street, while overhead hung a strange profusion of signs, some mere pictures, and others rude and gaudily painted images of birds, animals, and fabulous monsters. Angels and dragons, bears and lions, crows and cranes, oak trees and palms, painted red, blue, and green, or liberally gilded, creaked and swung from projecting poles over the roofs of the open stalls where the shopkeepers displayed their various wares. The diamond-paned windows of the upper stories were placed at random in any position which had suited the fancy or convenience of the builder, without regard to any principle of outward uniformity.

Picturesque as it was, Fleet Street would seem mean and dismal in modern eyes; but it was nothing to some of the alleys that opened into it, for not a few of the overhanging upper stories nearly met across the streets, and God's good air and sunshine were alike shut out from the stifling courts below.

The coach shook and rattled over the pavement till it seemed in danger of falling to pieces, yet the crowd of vehicles pouring out of the town forced them to move slowly. More than once they passed a group of children collected at the

mouth of some grim alley about a man with a dancing bear or a box of puppets, and several times their way was absolutely stopped by dense crowds of men and women gathered round some quack doctor crying his wares.

As they approached the quaint wooden gateway of Temple Bar, their carriage was stopped by one of these blockades, for a peculiarly daring mountebank had contrived by some means to scramble on to the sloping roof above the archways and was boldly haranguing the people from this point of vantage on the virtues of "the only true plague-water," which he declared to be an absolute preventive of infection.

"Where are the watchmen?" cried Clive. "Why doth not some one give him in charge? Look! he is scaring the senses out of those mad brutes in front. I am frightened every moment lest they should back yon great chariot upon us."

It would indeed have been a serious matter, for the great gilded coach in question was a tremendously heavy unwieldy structure. Its slightly rounded roof was of great width and height, and, though its sides curved inwards towards the bottom, it was large enough to seat six or eight persons besides the coachman. Its four well-fed spirited horses pranced and plunged and reared and backed, to the peril of the crowd which choked the narrow archways, but overhead the

quack still shrieked out the virtues of his "infallible remedy."

"Methinks," said Rupert, "I would as soon poison myself at once as swallow the strange waters and medicines recommended by such idle vagrants as yon shouting fellow. If I have seen one this day, I have seen a dozen, each with a great press of poor deluded fools around him in mighty horror of the plague, and ready to give their last penny to be secured from the infection."

"I wonder if it be really so much to be dreaded," said Clive thoughtfully. "At court this morning, even in his majesty's dressing room, there was no talk of aught but the distemper, and of the means by which one may hope to escape."

"It is far worse Westminster way than in the city. When I first set out this morning I saw several houses shut up, not far from the court either. Methinks, Harold, we had better travel home betimes, as soon as we can conclude our business here, lest we should be stayed by some accident."

"'Tis strange, Rupert, by what mischances you have been prevented getting speech of the king. Now had you gone to Whitehall this morning, as I desired, you could have told him all."

"I am grieved, Harold, that I followed not your advice; but I hoped to have seen the prince. However, to-morrow I will go with you to the tennis

court. Ah, now we are moving on again; but look! the crowd beyond the gate is nothing less."

Indeed the farther they went west the more crowded were the streets with wagons heaped high with household goods, immense coaches, and horses loaded with huge packs; and as they drew near the great houses in the Strand, they saw that many of their inhabitants were also preparing for flight, for trunks and boxes were being loaded on carts or carried by porters towards the river.

"Look at yon bills on the wall, Harold," said Rupert. "Even from here I can read in great capitals, 'Royal Antidote,' 'Never-failing Cordial,' and 'Plague,' 'Infection,' and what not. Methinks the town is running stark mad in its terror."

"It turns me well-nigh sick. Pah! Rupert, can you not talk of aught else? I always take any disease that is in the air."

"Then, Harold, let us leave town to-morrow."

"Nay; not to-morrow. I have promised my Lord Enderby to tarry here for him till Thursday. Had he not fallen sick he would have come hither a month ago, and this wearisome business of my marrying might have been brought to an end."

"I met my Lady Shirley yesterday, Harold, and she told me they were leaving town to-day. She bade me warn you also to be gone."

"Was my Lady Lillas with her?"

"Ay; at least there was a pretty, fair-haired little maid leaning back in the coach whom I took

for her. The countess is a noble and stately lady, and seemeth to take a wondrous interest in you." Clive shrugged his shoulders and Rupert continued with some hesitation: "She gave me another message to you, but I scarce know how to deliver it."

"Nay; out with it, man! I daresay it will not hurt me."

"It was that it grieved her sore to hear of you so often in the company of Sir William Wayne and my Lord Redwood and" —

"My Lady Shirley is something presumptuous to strive as yet to direct mine actions."

"Ay, but, Clive, indeed she is right!" cried Rupert eagerly. "It is little more than an hour ago since I saw Sir William playing the fool at the Angel Inn on Thames Street, in the midst of a crew of lads as grievously drunken as himself. I would that you would break with them, Harold, for they will surely lead you into wrong."

"No man need drink and play against his will, Rupert. Indeed, it pleaseth me ill enough to see them make fools of themselves; but at most times I have a most joyous, merry time with them, for they are wondrous witty and amusing. It is not as if I were unable to withstand the temptation to such excesses; methinks indeed to indulge in too much wine is little temptation to me."

Rupert looked uncomfortable, but said slowly: "Surely, Harold, I used to think so; but three

nights out of the last seven you have talked something idle on your return, and last night your fellow and I were fain to carry you upstairs. Methinks you would scarce have cared for my Lady Elmer to have seen you so."

Clive bit his lip and turned away; but, having broken the ice, Rupert was determined to finish what he had to say:—

"The doctors think, Harold, that the drunken and intemperate will be visited by this sickness, whoever escapes. Oh, I wish you would promise me to have no more dealings with my Lord Redwood."

"They laugh at you, Rupert, for a faint heart and a craven—forgive me for saying so. Here we are in Bow Street, and that is Will's Coffee-house at the corner with the sign of the cow. Will you come up with me?"

"Thank you," said Rupert; "it would like me much."

Ordering his coachman to wait, Clive led his friend upstairs, for the ground floor of the building was occupied by a haberdasher, whose gay displays of millinery and ribbons attracted many a fine lady and fashionable young gentleman to the neighborhood of the famous coffee-house.

When Clive opened the door Rupert found himself in a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, for every one who was not absolutely talking had a

pipe in his mouth, and the sound of many voices was almost as confusing to the ears as the smoke was to the eyes. He had never before been in a room in which there was such a great variety in the dresses and seemingly in the social position of the occupants. Clergymen in neat and sober black sat chatting with gallants in all the colors of the rainbow. In the center of the room a nobleman with a star on his breast was earnestly discussing the deplorable state of the fleet with a group of enthusiastic politicians, while in the corner a poor scholar whose ragged garments would hardly hang together was enjoying a steaming cup of coffee and sharply criticizing a young Templar's Latin verses.

"Mr. Forsyth," said Clive, stepping up to a table where a young man was reading a long, closely written manuscript, with a rather quizzical expression, "hath Mr. Dryden come hither to-day?"

Thrusting his papers into the pocket of his vest, Forsyth rose and, holding out his hand, said: "No; his great chair yonder is empty. Have you never seen him, Mr. Clive?"

"I have never spoken with him. This is the friend of whom I have told you, Mr. Forsyth. He had some curiosity concerning this place."

"Are you too a poet, sir?" asked Forsyth, turning to Rupert with a bow.

"No, no, sir. I had rather be soldier, sailor —

anything — than poet. I leave all such things to Harold Clive here."

Clive colored as Forsyth smiled and said: "I thought so. Few care to come hither twice save those who are ambitious of becoming wits and poets themselves."

"I know not whether I shall ever be a poet or no," Harold said frankly; "but of this I am assured, that to be aught else would not like me half so well. Think you," he added, "that Mr. Dryden would condescend to glance over a few short verses and give me his opinion of them?"

"I know not, fair sir. There would be no harm in asking it of him; he could but refuse at the worst, and I doubt not that many another poet might be eager for the honor."

"Have you any acquaintance with one Mr. Westerley? He hath craved permission to dedicate a volume of his poems to me."

"Ah! then he would doubtless be happy to read your poem."

"But hath he good judgment?"

"Good judgment? Nay; I presume not to pronounce any opinion on so delicate a matter. Methinks, fair sirs, we should find it cooler in the balcony."

They were hardly seated there when Forsyth said: "Look, Mr. Clive: is not that your old friend? Methinks he is seeking you."

"I will speak to him," said Harold.

As he crossed the room Forsyth watched him gravely, then turned to find Rupert studying him. His face was pleasant in spite of its plainness, and a very merry smile sometimes lit up his deep-set brown eyes. His sallow complexion, high cheekbones, rather wide mouth, and long nose slightly turned up at the point, all contributed to give an oddity to his appearance, which was increased by the length of his limbs and the extreme narrowness of his shoulders. His head, with its closely cropped dark hair, looked ridiculously small to eyes used to the enormous periwig, while the severe plainness of his brown suit of clothes added to his appearance of being "length without breadth."

"Good sir, are you also among the poets?" asked Rupert hastily, to cover his own confusion.

"No; I aspire not so high. My work, though done with pen and ink, is that of the very humblest servant of the muses. In truth I am by profession a surgeon, but having neither practice nor money to purchase interest in one, my bread is chiefly earned by making of translations of Greek and Latin authors for the booksellers, and of indexes for the learned gentlemen of the Royal Society. Having lived long about the town, and having thus excellent opportunities for the hearing of all kinds of rumours and tidings, I also write news-letters for several noble gentlemen in various parts of the kingdom."

"Is it not a hard life, or are you well able thus to gain a sufficiency? Perchance, though, I should beg your pardon for thus prying into your private business?"

"Nay; the life likes me well enough. It hath its pleasant sides, and ere long I shall, I trust, be able to live solely for my profession. My mother was left a widow before I entered my second year, and having been a laundry maid before she was wedded she returned to her old trade and kept us both in food and clothing: for my father, a poor country parson, had left us nothing but a few old Latin books. But perhaps these details weary you, sir?"

"Nay; indeed I am singularly interested. Pray continue."

"When I was old enough to be put to school, my friends made interest to have me educated free, and afterwards I went to Oxford as a servitor. I profess to you my life here seems easy and honorable enough after that. But what matters it? I gained my degree and some considerable knowledge of the learned tongues. Next I set myself to study medicine, teaching Greek and Latin the while for my bread, and for the past two years my mother and I have dwelt in Maiden Lane, and a few poor folk have come to me for physic. Methinks in these coming weeks I shall have enough to do, however, for I have to-day

received the appointment of surgeon to the pest-house in Westminster."

"Sure it will be very dangerous!"

"There is some danger, but I may live through it; and if I die, 't will be in the path at once of mine own choosing and of God's sending. All that grieveth me is the thought of my mother, for she would be entirely alone."

At that moment Clive and the old poet came from the private room where they had been reading the elaborate and extravagant dedication. Forsyth watched the young man attentively and said to his companion, "I like not that old fellow; I fear much that he is trying to make a fool of your friend. Look how he stands cap in hand, bowing and scraping with every word he utters, as if to humble himself to the very earth."

Harold hardly seemed to know how to dismiss his complimentary old friend. Rupert had never seen him look so embarrassed and uncomfortable before; but at last Mr. Westerley made his concluding obeisance and departed, and Clive came out on the balcony.

"Mr. Westerley is an excellent man at a dedication," remarked Forsyth dryly. "He gives better measure and more handsome compliments than any other man I know; but if my question be not impertinent, what will it please you to pay for all that?"

"To pay? What mean you, sir?"

"The least he will expect is a purse of gold."

"Then he shall have it, on condition that he presumes not to print his dedication. I thought — I thought — well none other man shall address such foolery to me," said Harold, beginning to think that after all his flattery was empty nonsense.

"Be not so hasty, sir. I have heard that the king himself thinks such handsome eulogies worth a good round sum at times. Besides 't will be your own, honestly bought and paid for."

"It is sickening!" cried Harold. "I should not have thought he could be so insincere" — he began, but stopped, remembering that when the old man had praised him for the beauty of Apollo and the wisdom of Solomon he could hardly expect that any one in his sober senses would understand him literally.

"Mr. Westerley doubtless meant to please you, and methought at first he had succeeded."

Clive frowned. "Do you take me for a fool, sir?"

Forsyth did not venture on a direct answer, but said, "These poets are ever in pressing need of money, sir, and when a young rich gentleman, and an admirer of letters like yourself, comes amongst them, it will go hard with them if they do not share his wealth. If I were you, I would shun all writers like the plague."

Harold was not pleased at this plain speaking,

but it was too true. The poets of that age were, as a rule, both poor and improvident, and writing fulsome dedications to the rich patrons of literature was a recognized method of increasing their scanty incomes.

Harold declared that his business at the coffee-house was concluded and asked Rupert to accompany him home, bidding Forsyth farewell with rather less cordiality than he had shown at first.

They dismissed the coach at Charing Cross, for their lodgings were close at hand, and Harold proposed that they should go into the park and endeavor to speak to the king, if he happened to be at his favorite pastime of pell-mell.

The hot afternoon sun poured down on the white floor of powdered cockleshells on which the game was played, but several gentlemen of the court, having thrown off coats and waistcoats, were hard at work with mallet and ball, and Rupert lingered to watch them.

"It seems a noble game," he said at last.

"Ay; but it is too hard exercise for a June day," replied Clive. "To me it seemeth useless to put so much force into mere sport."

"Well, every man to his own humor," said a voice behind them; "for mine own particular the game likes me well."

Rupert turned and looked the stranger full in the face, astonished at his taking the liberty of thus joining in their conversation. The man was

well dressed, and an elaborately curled periwig fell on his shoulders, from beneath a broad hat richly decorated with dark plumes. Rupert had only had time for one glance in which he gained a confused impression of soft dark eyes, black brows, a long straight nose, and a peculiarly heavy under lip, when Clive's unusual behavior claimed his attention. Instead of resenting the stranger's words as an intrusion, he made his deepest reverence, and then stood bareheaded, as if humbly awaiting his commands. So far from following his example, Rupert glanced from one to the other in such evident surprise that the stranger laughed outright, saying, "Mr. Clive, wherefore do you not present your friend to me?"

"His name, may it please your majesty, is Rupert Staynor," said Clive, who had been making agonized signs to Rupert to take off his hat from the moment of the king's appearance. Now to his great relief his friend removed it with haste, and making even a deeper bow than his own, reverently kissed the hand which Charles extended to him.

"You are then a son of mine old friend, Richard Staynor?"

"His grandson, may it please your majesty."

"Is he well, and his heroic lady? Ah, her noble defense of the abbey might put many an old soldier to the blush! If the same bold spirit had animated all our gentlemen, methinks we

should never have come to so grievous a pass. Shall you tarry long here, young sir?"

"I am come up, your majesty, to see whether there be any chance for me in the navy."

"There is ever room for bold active young fellows in that service," said the king. "Ah, well played, my lord!"

"May it please your majesty," began Rupert, stammering painfully, "our house—and our fortunes were alike ruined in the troubles, and—my grandfather is in present danger of—of the debtor's prison. He lost much"—

"I know it, Mr. Staynor, none better," said Charles, beginning to move away. "Your business shall be looked into immediately, and I doubt not that something can be done for you. Good-day, fair sirs."

Rupert was disappointed. He had hoped so much from an interview with the king. "What grieveth me," he said to Clive, "is that I could find no words to say to him what I meant."

"Let us go to the gardens," said Clive. "I promised my Lord Redwood to meet him by the dial at five of the clock. Methinks, Rupert, you have little cause to be grieved. The king denied not that he was greatly beholden to you, and professed his desire to serve you."

Rupert shook his head, saying, "Would you mind, Harold, if I returned home?"

"Nay; do as you please."



RUPERT'S INTERVIEW WITH THE KING.

CHAPTER XIII.

COURT GALLANTS.

CLIVE wandered by the rivulet that ran through the Privy Gardens for nearly ten minutes, then began a careful examination of the bronze and marble statues that adorned the stiff walks and square terraces, returning every few minutes to the neighborhood of the great stone dial, which now threw the shadows of its four fingers towards the west.

At last he left the garden and walked slowly past the galleries where the gentlemen of the court loitered away so many hours, and past the noble banqueting hall which not many years before had witnessed the strange sight of the execution of a king. The afternoon sun shone brightly on the battlements and on the four octagonal turrets of the great gateway before him, lighting up the contrasting colors of its checkered stonework and bringing out the natural tints and rich gilding of the busts that adorned the spaces between the small-paned windows of the towers. Here and there the shadow of some projecting piece of masonry gave relief to the eye, while the

deep shade within the archways seemed to promise coolness and comfort beyond. Through the broad, rounded central gateway, gilded coaches rolled with a hollow echo, while foot passengers in attire as gay as the plumage of tropical birds appeared and disappeared in the shadows of the narrow pointed arches under the towers.

Harold felt tired and languid with the heat, and, having nothing particular to do, he indulged his laziness and moved so slowly and stopped so often that more than one stranger fancied him ill and crossed over to the other side of the way to avoid passing him close, lest he infect them with the dreaded plague.

Just as he reached the gateway, however, a young man came out of the tennis court near by, and hurrying after him clapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming, "Halloo, Mr. Clive! do you call this keeping of your word? Here have I been loitering in the tennis court for two good hours waiting for you."

"The tennis court? Nay! 't was by the dial in the gardens we agreed to meet. It is I who have cause to blame you. I was there before five of the clock."

Lord Redwood shook his head. "Nay," he persisted, "the mistake is yours. Methinks, Hal, you were something overcome with wine last night."

"I!" cried Clive, trying to shake off his friend's arm. "*You* were, that I well know."

"Nay; ask your friend, that most sober and puritanical young preacher; he will tell you that your head was none of the clearest! Ay, he looked properly shocked, I promise you. Methought he would have given you a lecture on the 'vile sin of drunkenness.'"

Clive's cheeks flushed, and his friend said sneeringly, "Nay, never blush for it. We have all been a little over merry at times, I dare swear — your sanctified friend, doubtless, as well as another. By the way, Hal, it would be glorious sport to make him 'merry with wine.' Would he take to exhorting of us for our sins, think you? or would he set a-psalm-singing? Make him come with you to-night. I promise you we will do the young coxcomb no hurt."

"He's not so great a fool as to come."

"Is he not? Perchance he's afraid. Come, Hal, do ask him."

"I tell you he will not come."

"Methinks you don't want him to come, lest he should strive to keep you in order. I know you are mighty frightened of him. Why, last night he but said 'Harold!' to you in a kind of holy horror, and you well-nigh fell a-weeping;" and Lord Redwood laughed again more loudly than before.

"You lie!" cried Clive, laying his hand on his sword.

"Nay, man, I did but jest. Only, think you it

is treating the young fellow with common civility to leave him moping at home while you go off enjoying of yourself?"

"I know not whether I shall join you myself; I feel something indisposed."

"Nonsense, Hal! you are nervous. Make up your mind you won't be ill and then you won't. Pah! all this talk of sickness and death is enough to give one the horrors. You can go nowhere without hearing of incessant talk of the plague—that is what ails you."

"Well, my lord, where are you going this evening?"

"What think you of going to see 'The Mermaid' at the Duke's Playhouse? The playhouses are like to be shut up on account of the sickness full soon, so we must even make the best of them now. Then come home and sup with me. Wayne and the rest are coming."

"Then I'll come," said Clive, longing to refuse, but fearing lest he should be laughed at.

"And you'll bring Mr. Rupert Staynor?"

"If he chooseth to come. Good-day."

As he entered St. Martin's Lane he saw a man fastening the dreadful red cross on the door of a house at the corner, and like the rest of the passengers he crossed to the other side of the street to avoid it.

Rupert was writing at the table, and Clive flung himself down on a lounge and lay for some

minutes without speaking. At last he remarked slowly, "My Lord Redwood desired me to beg of you to join us to-night at the playhouse, and to sup at his house."

Rupert looked at his friend with a rather anxious, meditative expression; then said, "I think it not right to go to the playhouse, Harold; but as my Lord Redwood is so kind, I will gladly join you at supper. His house is on the Strand, is it not?"

The fact was that Rupert had begun to think during the last few days that he had been keeping very badly the promise he had made to Edith, when he bade her farewell, to take good care of Harold. When he had made it, he had thought chiefly of his friend's bodily health and comfort; but now he knew that London was full of dangers to soul as well as body.

Clive was ill pleased at his ready acceptance of Lord Redwood's treacherous invitation; but from motives of delicacy he never liked to attempt to influence Rupert's choice in any way while he was so dependent upon him. No more was said on the subject and soon afterwards Clive sent for a chair and dressed to go out.

Rupert looked at his attire with amused interest when he came in to give him full directions how to find Lord Redwood's house. His curled and powdered periwig was delicately scented, and fell from beneath a broad hat of deep red velvet,

shaded with plumes of the palest blue. His short blue coat, braided with silver, revealed a much-ruffled shirt as soft and fine as silk. His trowsers, close fitting to the knees, were trimmed with wide frills of silver lace, while over them he wore a short skirt or kilt fantastically adorned with puffings of blue satin. White silk stockings and low shoes tied with blue ribbons were on his feet, and in his hand he carried a pair of fringed and scented gloves. A short silk coat lined with crimson velvet hung from one shoulder, and from an embroidered sash was suspended a sword, of which the hilt glistened with gems.

"Shall you take coach to-night?" asked Rupert.

"No; my man hath called a chair. Not a coach was to be had for love or money, though he went all the way to the Maypole seeking of one."

His bearers had hardly reached the end of the street when a most terrible wailing and shrieking startled them, and setting the chair down they fled in haste up a narrow alley, crying out, "The plague! the plague!" Trembling in every limb, Harold opened the door to see what was the matter. The screams and shrieks proceeded from the open window of the house which he had seen marked that day with the red cross, but the door was now unfastened, and a man in white night-clothes was trying to pass the watchman, shouting wildly in delirium.

For a moment the guard succeeded in preventing his escape by a dexterous use of the long staff he carried, but only for a moment. Wild with pain and terror the sufferer pushed the watchman aside, and rushed shrieking toward the river, while overhead the dismal cries sounded louder.

Faint and sick, Harold leaned back in the chair, scarcely remembering where he was till a sudden jolt brought back his senses, and he knew that his bearers had returned. Then he threw open the panels for air, and for an instant took comfort in the thought of being alone no longer, till he found that the fellows were telling dismal stories of the horrors of being "shut up."

That night he could neither listen to the play nor to Lord Redwood's jests, for he was haunted by gruesome fears of the pestilence, and by recollections of his sister and Madge, neither of whom, he began to think, he would ever see again. He wished that he had not been so weak and wicked as to join his present companions, for he knew as surely as any one could tell him that he could not resist their evil influence. Even now when he opened his mouth it was to swear like the others, and to mock (though it seemed against his will) at all worth and goodness. Oh, why had he asked Rupert to meet them? What if he fell into the same sins? and he could scarcely hope that he would escape, for he knew that his companions

were plotting to force the lad to drink and swear with them.

The play was a long one, but soon after nine Lord Redwood's guests were assembled at his beautiful house in the Strand, round a table heaped with delicacies. Clive was miserable, for Rupert had come; but he tried to drown his remorse and wretchedness in the wine which their host pressed on them all. The memory of that corpse-like figure maddened with pain haunted him, a very skeleton at the feast; but the wine seemed to warm his blood and cheer his heart, and soon he was singing and shouting louder than any of the rest.

Presently a clear rich voice rang through the room singing one of the sweet old songs that had so often sounded amongst the abbey ruins, and with a tremendous effort he stilled himself to listen. He knew that it was Rupert, he saw his eyes fixed on him in sad reproach, and with half-maudlin penitence he burst into tears while the room rang with the plaudits of his companions. Shouts of coarse laughter mocked his misery, and in fierce resentment he flew madly on his nearest neighbor and tried to throw him down. Some one separated them, and he found himself struggling feebly in the grasp of several of his friends, while Rupert begged him to come home. The jeering tongues of Lord Redwood and Sir William Wayne added their mocking entreaties to him "to go quietly home like a dear good child,"

and shaking Rupert off, he followed the others to another room overlooking the gardens, where the gentle wash of the river against its banks sounded pleasantly from the darkness. Great wax candles in silver sconces filled the chamber with mellow light; rare statues and pictures decked each nook and corner; luxurious couches tempted the idle with their velvet cushions; vases of sweet-scented roses perfumed the air, and from the dusky garden rose the melodious notes of a harp.

Excited and miserable as he was, Clive felt for a moment the sweet influences of this palace of pleasure, and flinging himself on a couch he tried to listen to the rippling music and the soft sounds of the water; but he had not been thus in quiet for five minutes when Lord Redwood forcibly dragged him from his resting place and pushed him into a chair at the card table.

Rupert refused to play, and remonstrated with his host on thus treating a reluctant guest, but in vain. They scoffed at his hypocrisy, as they called it, and sneered at him for "living like a beggar on other men's charity." The lad's cheeks flushed, but he kept his seat among them and replied neither by word nor look, for Clive was still at the cards and playing so ill that his opponents soon won every gold piece in his possession.

"Now, Hal, come away," he said at last, when Clive left the table; "you are in no state to play with them."

"You ranting, psalm-singing fanatic, dare you say I played unfairly?" cried Sir William.

"I say nothing, sir," replied Rupert, taking Clive's arm; and adding as he bowed to Lord Redwood, "We thank you, my lord, for your hospitality."

"What, Mr. Clive, will you be ruled by yon young cub?"

"Let go mine arm!" cried Clive angrily; and failing to shake himself free, he suddenly lifted his other hand, and gave Rupert a blow on the cheek. Rupert dropped his arm as if he had been shot, and half drew his sword, while a wild shout of laughter echoed through the room; but Clive was for the moment sobered, and looked sorry and ashamed.

"Ay, Mr. Staynor, that's right," said Lord Redwood. "No gentleman can take such a blow as that unavenged. You are bound to fight, unless he will apologize!"

"I'd never apologize, Hal, if I were you," cried Wayne. "The young fellow richly deserves to be taught how to keep his place."

The hot blood of his fighting ancestors seemed to be boiling in his veins, and for one moment Rupert stood with his hand on his sword and his eyes on the man who had dared thus to insult him publicly.

"Sir," repeated the tempter at his side, "your honor demands satisfaction."

Rupert turned towards him and saw not the flushed, bloated face of the young nobleman, but the picture on the wall over his head. Strange how it had come into such a place! It was a wonderful painting of the Son of Man bound, bruised, blindfolded. His attitude expressed noble fortitude as well as meek patience under insults the most galling and humiliating. The coarse faces of the tormenters were also wonderfully expressive, and, alas! true to nature; but Rupert saw nothing save the central figure of the Christ, and as he looked he returned his sword into its sheath, slowly opened the door, and left the room.

He was followed by derisive shouts; then some one suggested that he should be pursued and brought back, and they all rushed out into the street, vowing vengeance upon him. But their humor changed, and the next moment they were dancing around the tall Maypole opposite Somerset House, singing and shouting till the uproar frightened away the poor old watchman who was going his rounds with a lantern; but as he fled they followed with drawn swords, forcing every one whom they met into the middle of the street. Clive could hardly stumble on, but Lord Redwood supporting him on one side and another noble gentleman on the other, they contrived to drag him forward with the rest. Presently they met a coach full of ladies, attended by several gentlemen

on horseback and three or four linkboys (for there were no lamps in the streets), and Wayne, trying to wrest a torch from one of the lads, caused a general scuffle in which several of the party received a severe horsewhipping, as they richly deserved.

Next they turned up a narrow street near Temple Bar, so dark and dirty none of them would have cared to enter it had they been in full possession of their wits. Even as it was, they soon turned back, groping their way by the walls, and shouting and swearing as they stumbled against stalls or caught their feet in the uneven pavement. As they neared the end of the alley, their shouts were answered with derisive cries, and the dim, smoky light of two or three links held high at the entrance showed a knot of dark figures drawn up to receive them. This was another party of high-born young ruffians like themselves, who had determined to vary the monotony of the proceedings by provoking a fight. Nothing loath, Lord Redwood's party flung themselves eagerly into the fray, and for ten minutes they struggled furiously. Harold was thrown down and was in danger of being trampled to death, when a slow procession preceded by two torchbearers came into view.

Two black-robed, black-veiled women walked beside a bier covered with a black cloth, and behind came three or four men in mourning

dressess. The combatants ceased fighting, and with shrieks of terror fled in all directions, leaving Clive lying senseless in the mire.

Meanwhile Rupert had been wandering up and down the dark streets, vainly trying to subdue his passionate resentment against Harold. He told himself how unlike his friend it was to put such a shameful insult upon him; he tried to dwell on his untiring kindness and generosity; he assured himself that he would never have done such a thing in his right senses; but, argue with himself as he would, he could not forgive the blow. Nay, he could hardly forgive himself that he had not demanded satisfaction for it.

Yet again the memory of that gentle figure in the picture recurred to his mind. He would have dismissed it if he could, for he scarcely cared at present to think of his duty as a Christian to forgive when injured; but look where he would, that patient, submissive Sufferer seemed ever present; and he felt at last as if he had taken his place among the cruel mockers and scourgers, for, while he professed to serve and honor him, he knew that he was not fighting as he might against the unholy anger that possessed him.

Careless whither he went, and only determined never again to take anything from the hand that had struck him, he wandered down to the river and seating himself on the edge of a wharf he watched the peaceful water at his feet as intently

as if nothing else were occupying his thoughts. The longer he reflected the more hard and unforgiving he felt. He recalled every word that had been spoken concerning him that evening, and concluded that Clive had been boasting of his own generosity, for they had reproached him with depending on charity.

Unconsciously the sad words of the Psalmist rose to his lips, and he murmured, "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted hath lifted up his heel against me."

"Surely, my son, that is a hard case," said a voice at his side, which he recognized as belonging to one of the speakers at a conventicle he had attended the week before. "Who hath offended thee?"

Rupert rose and bowed, but disregarded the question.

"What hath angered thee, my son?" repeated the man.

"Sir, I know not that I should do well to tell the story," replied Rupert. "My friend hath been a true one to me until now, and I care not to publish the reason of our quarrel."

"Nay, then, if you judge it best to keep silence, confide thy sorrow and perchance thy sin to God alone."

"Indeed," began Rupert, provoked to justify himself by the man's grave tone, "methinks the wrong I suffered was altogether undeserved."

"Well, for the sake of argument we will admit that thou wast buffeted for well-doing; therefore it but remains to ask, Hast thou taken it patiently?"

"How can I choose but feel wounded and grieved?"

"And angered at him who did thee wrong? Methinks, my son, that the Lord's Prayer would die on thy lips to-night. 'Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!' Perchance (if, as I think, thou art among his redeemed and chosen) thy Lord to-night may share thy plaint: 'Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me'!"

Long after his companion had passed on his way, Rupert stood looking into the gray mists that lay on the water, fighting once again the battle with his own rebellious heart that he had thought over forever. Forgiveness would mean returning to Clive's lodgings as if nothing had happened, and sitting at his table and eating his bread as before. Lord Redwood and his friends would laugh at his humility, and declare that he would bear any affront for the sake of what he could get. His pride revolted at it, and ready like the rest of us to cheat himself, he declared that Clive would probably not desire his return. He knew well enough that he was trying to deceive himself. He had seen Harold's downcast

face, directly the blow was given; but the certainty of the ridicule of which he would be the object made the thought of his return insufferable. If this were forgiveness, he could not forgive!

Already he was thankful that God had held him back from drawing his sword on Harold to avenge the insult. A fearful picture rose before his mind, of Clive wounded and dying, of Edith weeping at his side, of himself shamed forever with the murderer's brand upon his brow, and of them all at home turning away from him in horror. Thank God it had not come to that!

But he could not and would not overlook the past. Harold and he must henceforth live apart. "Mine own familiar friend!" he could call him no more; and then the minister's strange use of the words recurred to him, sending a sudden flood of light on his bitterness and anger. Was it true that Christ was as grieved with him as he was with Harold? Was it really lifting up his heel against his Saviour to proudly refuse to do his bidding for the dread of foolish ridicule?

He knew there was but one answer to these questions, and turning from the gray river he set his face towards home, determined that he would strive with all his might both to forgive and to forget.

He had wandered some distance, and, not knowing the city well enough to venture on taking short cuts in the darkness, he made his way into

the Strand, and walked as fast as he could ; but missing one of the many bridges that crossed the water courses flowing towards the river, he stumbled into the middle of the stream. He easily scrambled on to firm earth again, but the accident had taught him caution, and he proceeded much more slowly. More than once, notwithstanding, he caught his foot in a hole, or ran against a sign-post. As he neared the Maypole he heard a distant uproar and a second later a number of young men rushed up the street, shrieking wildly.

He fancied he recognized the voice of Wayne, and drawing aside to let them pass, listened anxiously to hear whether Clive were with them. A little farther down the street he met the funeral procession that had so scared Lord Redwood's followers, and crossing the road to avoid it he hurried on, fearful lest his tormentors of the evening should turn back and fall upon him in the darkness. He had not gone many yards farther when he heard a muffled groan from the dim entrance to an alley near by, and looking closely he saw what seemed like a light-colored bundle on the ground, but when he stooped to raise it his hand touched soft curls of hair. In his first surprise he feared that he had come upon the murdered victim of some of the young ruffians who had passed him, for the curls were damp with blood ; but gathering courage after a moment's hesitation, he bent down again and touched the

face, of which he could just see the dim outline. It was cold, but not death-cold; and kneeling down he felt among the silks and laces of the rich dress to find out whether the heart was still beating, little guessing whom he was tending. Alone thus in the stillness and darkness of the great city at midnight with a wounded and helpless man upon his hands, he was utterly at a loss how to proceed.

Suddenly the watchman's voice rang close beside him: "Twelve of the clock, and a dark cloudy night!" and springing up he hurried towards him and begged his assistance.

Holding his lantern so that the light fell full on the white face, the old man said slowly, "Me-thinks it's one o' them young Hectors, worse luck to him! He ain't dead, not he!"

But Rupert had seen the face, and, utterly forgetful now of wrong and insult, he exclaimed eagerly, "Call me a coach and I will carry him home. Make haste, and you shall have a piece of gold." Kneeling down he raised the prostrate form in his arms and wiped away the mud and dust from his friend's face as tenderly as any mother could have done.

The old man looked at him with something like contempt. "He ain't nought but dead drunk," he said as he hobbled away to fetch the coach. He was a long time gone and returned at last without one, saying, "They do all be taken, sir, or the men is abed and care not to get up."

"Then get a chair or a cart or anything," said Rupert. "He will bleed to death here."

"Nay; there do be no fear of that, master," said the watchman, chuckling. "Such as he is hard to kill, more's the pity!"

Ten minutes later they lifted Clive into a huckster's cart and laid him on a bundle of hay at the bottom, and in this ignominious fashion he was carried home. Ashamed that any one should see him as he was, Rupert wrapped his own cloak over the mud-stained garments and threw one corner over the pale, cut face before he called his servant to aid in carrying him to his bedroom.

The cut that had alarmed him was not very deep, and by the time a surgeon came to dress it Clive had recovered consciousness sufficiently to be heartily ashamed of himself. A vague remembrance of the events of the evening made him unusually constrained with Rupert, but his head was still so confused that he was quite uncertain what had really happened.

Recommending him to keep perfectly quiet and promising to call again in the morning, the doctor left him, and he slept till midday; but his head still ached grievously and he felt so weak and miserable that he could hardly crawl out of bed.

As it happened the surgeon was an obsequious, smooth-spoken man who was exceedingly glad to be

called to a rich patient, and utterly ignored the disgraceful cause of the disaster. Indeed he administered so much open flattery with his medicines that Clive thought of the dedication and was disgusted.

"Rupert, let not that fool come near me again. If he is as simple as he pretends and really doth not know what aileth me, I care not to drink his vile drugs, for there is small chance of their doing of me good. Why did you send for him?"

"Because I was frighted lest you had received some serious hurt."

"Not I!" said Clive bitterly. "I could have found it in mine heart to wish that the hurt had been unto death. Rupert, I am ashamed to look you in the face, for I know not what I said or did in my folly, and yet I seem to fancy (I hope it is but a dream!) that I even struck you."

Rupert did not answer, and Harold continued: "Tell me, Ru, exactly what I did do. Oh, I'll never boast myself of finding of no temptation in drink again. Methinks I acted as if some demon had possessed me. I know not how I shall dare trust myself with such a crew again."

"I would break with them, Harold, for surely no man can trust to himself (nay, nor to God either), if he willfully runs into temptation. Besides, the doctor says that you will ruin yourself sooner if you fall into this evil habit than would

a man of stronger health. He told me but this morning that it would be death to you in ten or twelve years at furthest."

"The false coward! He talked to me of naught but the effect of a blow so near the brain. Wherefore spoke he not the truth?"

"Nay, I daresay he cared not to risk offending of you!"

"I saw that he was lying to me; but now, Rupert, do you please to show me the plain truth of all last night's adventure. First, did I strike you or no?"

"Yes; if you must needs have it, you did."

"In the midst of that lamentable company! Then, Rupert, I humbly beg you to forgive me, and I assure you on mine honor as a gentleman that I would sooner have lost my right hand than have put such a base slur upon you there of all places in the world. I deserved to be beaten like a cur for so mean behavior!"

Rupert smiled and held out his hand, and Clive went on: "Now for the rest, Rupert. I want to hear all you know. Come!"

Thus entreated Rupert told the whole story, and, strange to say, perhaps nothing was better calculated to restrain the young poet from indulging in such excesses in the future than the account of how he had been found in the mire and carried home at the bottom of a common cart.

"Well, methinks I have received some part of the punishment I deserved," was his comment. "Think you that many folk saw me thus, Rupert? Sure I wonder the servants can refrain themselves from laughing in my face."

CHAPTER XIV.

SHUT UP.

DID you contrive to see the king to-day, Rupert?" asked Clive, some days later, after his friend had spent the morning at Whitehall and in the park.

"No; methinks his majesty hath taken alarm, and hath kept within, out of danger of infection. He leaves for Oxford to-morrow, with the court, so 't is vain for us to tarry longer. I will go presently to the mayor to get our bills of health, if it like you, Hal, and then methinks we had better pack up and away, since there is nothing to stay us here."

"I had a letter from Edith to-day, and she is growing anxious for our return. The news-letters must be making of the worst of it. She seems well-nigh frightened out of her wits for us. I am grieved our journey hither hath not served you better, but I am of your mind, that we had best leave town while we may."

"Indeed, the danger is no light one. I saw a poor wretch, scarce an hour ago, coming from the market with a basket on his arm, and suddenly he gave a cry, and going to sit down on a doorstep

to rest himself, in less than ten minutes was a dying man."

"God help us! I trust you touched him not, Rupert."

"Nay; I crossed to the other side, though it seemed cruel to leave the poor fellow in his pain. A surgeon coming by opened his clothes, and finding the tokens on his breast bade them carry him to the pesthouse; so one fetched a coach and he was put therein. He was scarce like to reach it alive. The streets are more blocked to-day than ever yet, and I fear we shall be cruelly troubled to get horses for our journey."

"Could we not go up by sea?"

"Ay, that we might, if we can get any captain to adventure taking us from this part of the town. Methinks there may be difficulty on that score!"

"Well, I will send Haynes to buy what horses he can for us; then, if no ship will carry us, we must e'en travel by land. I would we had not been so great fools as to stay thus long."

Clive himself went to see about their certificates of good health, without which it was vain to attempt to leave London, as no town upon the road would permit them to pass, while Rupert went to engage their passage in some vessel bound for Liverpool, or, indeed, for any northern port.

It was late when he returned to the lodgings, and found the people of the house also preparing for immediate flight. He felt so tired that he was

almost faint. He had had nothing to eat since noon, but the sight of food turned him sick.

When Clive entered the room an hour later he was lying half asleep on a couch in the darkness, but when Harold spoke he sat up, rubbing his eyes. "Have you got our bills of health, Hal?"

"Yes; but there was such a press for them that I have been waiting on my lord mayor all these hours, packed in the crowd like a herring in a barrel. God grant that my neighbors were sound and whole! Hath Haynes returned yet?"

"Nay; but I have bargained with the captain of the Queen Catherine to carry us to Liverpool. We can go aboard to-morrow, but he will not sail till Friday."

"Have you had supper, Ru?"

"Nay; I care for naught just now. Methinks I will take a draught of milk and go to bed. I am something weary; it hath been so hot all day."

"Wherefore have they not brought up the candles?" exclaimed Clive rather impatiently as he seated himself at the table. "It is well-nigh ten of the clock, and the room looks wondrous dreary and uncared for. Ah, there is Mary now."

The girl who brought in the lights looked pale and frightened, and Clive asked involuntarily, "What is amiss, Mary?"

"The house over the way hath just been shut up, sir," she said, "and now there is some poor wretch next door to us a-shrieking fit to raise the

dead. God help us all! Oh, hearken, sirs! did you ever hear the like of that?"

The three looked on one another in terror, and then ran to the open window, for a strange, unearthly voice sounded above the rattle of the traffic that was still going on, crying, "Woe! woe! woe! Yet a few days and London shall be destroyed! Oh, the great, the dreadful God!"

The weird tones thrilled them with horror. As they stood gazing down, the tall, gaunt figure of a man with bare arms and legs crossed the light from an open door opposite and fled wildly up the street, still shrieking out his prophecy of doom.

Clive sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands. Mary shrieked and sobbed aloud, but Rupert only said dreamily, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

"Do you believe, Ru, that God is thus visiting of us in his wrath?"

"Ay, Hal! that I do. In olden time did he not oft send wars and pestilence to chastise his erring people, and did ever Israel wander so grievously out of the way as this people of England hath done now? I tell you, Harold, that many a godly man hath wondered that the abominations practiced at Whitehall have not provoked God to destroy us even with the plagues of Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Mr. Haynes hath but now returned," put in the girl, "and he saith a great concourse of folk

were gathered nigh St. Bride's burying ground watching of a ghost walking over the tombstones there and pointing to the houses round about with a great sword."

"Methinks the imagination of the people is clean disordered with terror," said Rupert.

"Haynes is a grave, sensible fellow and scarce like to be led away by overmuch imagination," said Clive.

"Nay, sirs, Mr. Haynes saith he himself saw naught in the churchyard from first to last."

"Well, Mary," returned Clive, slightly reassured, "bid him come up and report himself."

The man looked deathly pale and could scarcely stand. He had had no success, for all the horses in the town seemed to be either sold or hired, or their owners, expecting the demand for them to still increase, were holding them back.

"Ah, well, it matters not," replied his master, "for Mr. Staynor hath engaged our passage to Liverpool in the Queen Catherine."

"Thank God for that! The pest is growing mighty raging all around us now. Ten houses are shut up between us and Whitehall."

"I like not yon fellow's looks," said Harold as the man left them. "Would we had left a month ago! However, let us to bed. We will go aboard the Catherine first thing in the morning."

During the earlier part of the night there was so much noise in the house itself and in the

streets without and Clive was so excited and nervous that he could not sleep. Toward morning, as it grew cooler, he fell into a heavy slumber, and having drawn the curtains of his bed to keep the light from his eyes he did not awake till late. Even then, feeling very comfortable, he lay for some time in that pleasant state of half-consciousness that follows waking, till he began to wonder that he heard no sounds in the house and drew out his watch from under his pillow. It was nearly eleven, and rising hastily with a sudden remembrance of his determination to take refuge on the ship as soon as possible, he called for Haynes. Several times he repeated his summons, but it was unanswered; and dressing himself quickly he went downstairs.

From the street came the loud rattle of carts and carriages on the pavement, but within no sound broke the stillness. The doors of the rooms were open; half-packed trunks lay about the floors; the beds were left in wild disorder, but there was no sign of any human creature in the house.

No fire was lighted in the unswept kitchen, but the remains of a hasty meal lay on the table. Neither the mistress nor Haynes nor any of the family were to be seen below, and Clive, beginning to think that they had been deliberately deserted, turned back up the stairs to search the upper rooms. His servant slept in an attic above

his own room. As he opened the door the sunlight from the little gable window dazzled and blinded him ; but only for a moment. The next instant he uttered a cry that rang wildly down into the street.

In the corner, stretched across the bed, lay his faithful servant dead and cold. His ghastly face was turned full to the light, and his wide-open eyes were dull and glazed.

The horror of this unexpected sight took the strength from Harold's limbs, and with that fearful cry for help he sank down on the floor, dizzy and panting. Suddenly it occurred to him that breathing the air of that infected room was adding each moment to his peril of a like shocking death. Nerved by the thought of this awful danger, he gathered strength to fly down the stairs, and bursting open the door of Rupert's room he cried out : "O Rupert ! the plague is on us ! Haynes is dead of it in the chamber above, and the cowards here have left us to our fate."

Rupert looked as if he scarcely understood.

"Come not near me, Hal !" he called out wildly. "For my Lady Elmer's sake, shut the door and go."

"O Ru ! what mean you ?"

"Go, Harold, I tell you ! I have the distemper upon me. Bid them all farewell for me !"

"Rupert, I cannot leave you. Perchance you are mistaken."

"Nay ; go you must. I am not mistaken," he answered more quietly. "The swellings are coming out upon my neck, which is a sure sign, they say, and I am sick and faint and fevered. Be not so foolhardy, Harold ; it would grieve me sore to give you the sickness, and every moment you linger here is of peril for you. Perchance they would take me at the pesthouse. Oh ! please be gone !"

Harold shut the door and Rupert sank back among his pillows, exhausted even by the effort required to speak to his friend.

Clive had always had an intense nervous dread of disease and death, and now as he threw open his window and leaned his arms on the sill, he felt like a condemned criminal taking his last look at earth and sky. He drew deep breaths of the fresh morning air, but the ghastly corpse upstairs seemed to pollute everything. He tried to think what he must do, but his busy fancy had conjured up scenes of such horror, in which he was always the principal figure, that he felt as if he were already dead and had passed beyond the cares and duties of life.

Suddenly a loud, piteous cry for water broke in on his meditations, and filling a cup to the brim he went to Rupert's room. The poor lad drained it eagerly, then, remembering all, exclaimed sadly :—

"O Clive ! how could you let me touch you ?

I meant not to cry out thus ; but if you love me, take no heed in future."

"Nay, Rupert ; rather, pray for me, lest I prove myself a base and selfish coward !" he replied ; and going again to his own room he knelt beside the window, and calling to a passer-by in the dress of a clergyman begged him to send a surgeon.

"What ! have you the plague ?"

"Ay ; one sick in the house and one dead, and the rest all fled, reverend sir."

Nearly half an hour passed before the surgeon came, and Clive wandered miserably about the deserted house trying to prepare himself for death, but failing utterly to keep his attention to any one line of thought for five minutes in succession. At last he took up his old position by the window to watch for the surgeon. Presently he saw in the distance a man carrying a long red wand, as all attendants on the sick had been commanded to do, and, as he seemed to be looking for some particular house, he ran down and opened the door.

"Sir," said the surgeon, "is this the house where one lieth sick of the plague ?"

"Yes, good sir. I thank God that you have come. My friend is in a raging fever, and hath great swellings rising in his neck."

"I will go see him, with your leave, young sir."

"How long will he live ? Hath he any chance

of recovery?" asked Clive as the doctor came out of the sick room.

"Ay; there is greater hope for him than for many an one that seemeth well. I will send you medicine and a plaster for him. If the tumors can be made to break, I trust he may do well; but you should have a nurse for him. You cannot tend him yourself."

"If any woman will adventure herself in this doleful house, I will gladly give her double fee. But, sir, my servant — who lieth dead upstairs — what shall I do concerning him?"

"Leave him where he is till night, for he may not be buried till sunset. But, if it like you, I will send a man to you to take your orders for burying of him decently."

"Ay, sir. Shall we have to be presently shut up?"

"Yes; there is no help for it. A watchman will be here in a few minutes; it is the only means to prevent the plague spreading throughout the length and breadth of the city. He will bring all you need or desire."

"Then may I not go out, even though I fall not sick?"

"Nay; not if you choose to remain with your friend. But if it like you better, you may yet go to some unoccupied house, and being shut up there for at least a week, may after that go free, if the disease show not itself upon you in the meantime."

"I will not leave Mr. Staynor; but for how long shall we be thus imprisoned?"

"For a month after he is whole again."

"Think you not that I am sure to take it?"

"I will send you a preventive against infection, and now and again you must burn gunpowder and brimstone or pitch and resin to make a great smoke in your own rooms, and if you go near your friend sprinkle vinegar on your clothes and hold a handkerchief wet with the same to your nostrils. By these means you may, perchance, escape the infection altogether."

"You will call again, I trust, to see how Mr. Staynor goes on?"

"Ay; if I be not myself taken," said the doctor gravely.

A few minutes later the watchman arrived, and going round the house fastened both doors and windows on the outside as securely as he was able, fixed the red cross on the door, with the words "Lord have mercy on us!" close above it, and took up his station in the street. Clive watched these dismal preparations with unspeakable horror, for in spite of the surgeon's hopeful words he was firmly persuaded that neither he nor Rupert would ever go out alive.

Many times during the morning he went upstairs to give his friend such food and drink as he would take, but Rupert was only anxious that he should not come near him.

"'T is no use fighting against it, Ru," he said at last. "If God wills it, I suppose I shall live, and if not, I must die, whether I come nigh you or not."

"What is that noise?" asked Rupert wearily.

"The watchman nailing up the lower windows. We are fast prisoners together, Rupert, and they mean not to have us escape. One keeper is to guard us by day and another by night, and a nurse will presently be here to keep watch on us within."

The nurse sent them was a pleasant-faced, soft-voiced woman of middle age, and both lads felt her presence a consolation and support. She had not been in the house many hours before its comfortless, disorderly appearance was entirely removed, and at night Clive sat down to a supper so daintily cooked that he ate more than he had had all the day before.

Rupert was asleep at last, for the medicine had soothed him; and Mrs. Thurlow lingered a few moments to talk to his friend.

"I admire that you were not frightened to take pity on us in our distress," said Clive.

"What else can I do, good sir? Mine husband is a bricklayer, but the sickness hath put an entire stop to that trade, and for well-nigh a week my lads and wenches have gone hungry to bed. I deny not that at first it liked me ill to think of adventuring myself right into the midst of the contagion — deed, when Dr. Arthur did speak of

my coming here, I said nay without thinking. He looked at me solemn-like and says, 'My good woman, I ask you not to do what I myself am frightened of. I too have my little ones at home, and the lad,' says he, 'will surely die if he hath not the best of care.' Them's his very words, sir, saving your presence. Doubtless he did see you were not strong, nor used to sickness. Well, even then I could scarce make up my mind, and says I, 'Jim, what think you of it?' 'Well,' says he, 'methinks I do have a chance to get on to the grave-digging—mayhap we shall do all right, good wife.' But then I looked at Betty (she's my eldest, sir, as good a lass as ever stepped and handy too) and says I, 'Dr. Arthur, I'm a-going round as soon as I can gather up my things, for the lass can manage well enough. So here I am, for it came into my mind sudden-like that perhaps the Lord meant me to go!'"

"Do you think Mr. Staynor will recover?"

"The Lord only knows. He is but just beginning of the distemper."

"But my servant, who lies upstairs there, was seemingly in health up to this hour yesterday—ay, and afterwards!"

"Ay; but the doctor says the infection do work two ways. On some it goes inward, and they do believe themselves whole and well till they are on the very point of death, and with them there is no hope. No help can reach them, though they

sicken and die without any great pain or suffering. But when there are swellings and tumors, the disease often takes many days, and the sick suffer grievously at times, though there is hope of their recovery. If we can but get the tumors to break, Mr. Staynor will do well, I doubt not, and Dr. Arthur is a skillful surgeon, if ever there were one."

Nevertheless there soon came a time when pain and fever together drove Rupert into wild delirium. His nurse had to call Clive to assist to hold him down in bed, but, though he was shouting Harold's name half the time, he did not recognize him. He seemed to fancy that he was Lord Redwood or one of his friends, and he struggled wildly to get free.

The swellings in his neck grew harder and larger, but showed no sign of breaking, and one morning after he had been in agonies of pain all night long, Mrs. Thurlow told Clive that she feared he could scarcely live through the day.

Harold immediately sent the watchman for the doctor, but the man came back saying that he too was down with the plague.

"Fetch me a surgeon from somewhere," cried Harold, "and you shall have a sovereign for your pains. Surely there must be physicians to be had in this great town!"

"Many are dead, sir, and the rest fled; but I will do my best to bring one."

Clive watched him with miserable impatience as he hurried down the street. From the next room came fearful cries of agony, for Rupert in his delirium had lost all self-control, and Harold stopped his ears with his fingers to deaden the sound. An instant later he heard his own name called in frightened tones.

"What is the matter, Mrs. Thurlow?" he asked, going to the door of Rupert's room. "A surgeon will presently arrive, I trust."

"Make haste, sir, make haste! I cannot hold him!" she gasped. "Oh, I was frighted lest he should throw himself from the window before I could make you hear."

Rupert was out of bed and struggling to get free from his nurse, but when Clive came to her help he submitted to be laid down again. Harold seated himself between the bed and the window, and Mrs. Thurlow said, "Think you that you can watch him, sir, while I go down to get his soothing draught? Poor lad! he hath never been so mighty unmanageable before."

"Have you had breakfast, ma'am?" asked Clive as she was leaving the room. "If not, stay now and get it, and if I greatly need your help, I can ring the bell for you."

"Thank you, sir. Methinks I should be the better of something to eat, and I will put the bell within reach of your hand."

For some time Rupert lay quite still, breathing

heavily, and being quite unconscious of his change of attendants. Suddenly he sat up and tried to sing, evidently fancying himself at some meeting, but seemed distressed at his difficulty in keeping the tune. Clive put his arm round him to hold him, though he never touched him without a dread that he might be bringing death on himself; and then seeing a Bible close at hand, he opened it at random and began to read aloud, for he thought that Rupert might be soothed by it.

The book opened at the Gospel of John, and not stopping to choose any passage he began at the first words which caught his eyes, in the middle of the account of how Jesus stilled the winds and waves. For a moment Rupert seemed not to hear him, but by and by his restless tossing ceased, and a more peaceful expression stole over his pain-worn face. Not daring to move for fear of disturbing him, Clive read slowly on, verse after verse, in clear distinct tones; yet no word of all that beautiful chapter had any meaning for him. Mechanically his eyes followed the lines and his lips uttered the words, but his thoughts were fixed on the gloom and horror that surrounded him.

Rupert was surely dying. A week ago his sorrow for him would have been very bitter, for he loved him like a brother; but now despair had conquered him, and it seemed vain to grieve for Rupert when he could scarcely hope to survive him many hours. Ever since the wretched even-

ing at Lord Redwood's house, the remembrance of that cowardly blow had haunted him; but now he was comforted to feel that he was facing the peril of an awful death for Rupert's sake, though he would never know it.

He held his friend the closer, and read on, till the door opened and Mrs. Thurlow entered followed by a doctor whose face and voice seemed half familiar to him. It was Forsyth; but Harold did not recognize him till he uttered a sharp exclamation of dismay. "For heaven's sake, Mr. Clive, know you that you are literally seeking of death? How long have you been in that posture?"

Harold looked at him in a dull uncomprehending fashion, but neither spoke nor stirred till the doctor forcibly drew him away from the bed and led him downstairs.

"Sir," exclaimed Clive indignantly, "I did not call for you to interfere with me thus. I desire naught but your opinion of my friend's condition."

"It is rank folly, Mr. Clive," said Forsyth impatiently, "to rush thus into danger. Drink this, take food and rest, and pray God not to judge you for your presumption."

"Can you not do anything to relieve Mr. Staynor's agonies? He hath been utterly beside himself this morning. I was obliged to hold him to prevent his doing of himself some mischief."

"If the tumors cannot be made to break, he is a dead man," said Forsyth sadly. "Methinks I can do naught for him, but put caustic upon them, and that of itself is mighty painful at times."

"Nay, then let him die in peace. 'Tis cruel to torture him uselessly."

"But, Mr. Clive, many an one hath recovered who was full as sick as he."

"I am fain to wish you had not spoken to me first," said Clive. "If you think there is good hope of saving him, use the caustic; but if not, give him not useless pain. I myself am something sick and faint this morning. Think you that the distemper hath got hold on me?"

"I trust not; but if you choose, I will examine you."

Clive assented, fully expecting to be told that he had but an hour or two to live, but Forsyth said, "No, sir; you have neither swelling nor tokens. 'Tis no strange thing to feel faint and sick at such a time as this. The want of natural food and rest and the pressure of anxiety telleth on folk."

"Mrs. Thurlow is also well-nigh exhausted. Methinks if any woman will come, I had best get more aid for her. Do you know of a nurse who would tend poor Rupert kindly?"

"There is a woman now shut up alone in a house not far distant. Her patient hath died, and it still wants three weeks to the time of her

release; doubtless she would gladly come. I must not tarry here longer, so with your good leave I will go up again to see Mr. Staynor and to do for him as I judge the best."

Clive was very thankful when the second nurse arrived, for after the application of the caustic Rupert required even more watching than before. At times he was so violent that they were obliged to tie him in bed, and though Harold took his share of nursing with the women, it was a most painful duty.

On the night after Dr. Forsyth's visit, he had been watching till twelve o'clock, when, utterly unnerved, he went to the window of his own room to get some air. It was so near the sick chamber that he could hear every cry and motion; but downstairs the rooms were stifling with their closed doors and windows.

As he sat on the broad window ledge, the fresh air revived him, and brought back his powers of thought. "O God," he cried aloud, "have pity on the poor lad yonder and give him death!"

Overhead the peaceful stars shone down on the wretchedness and misery of the great city, and as Clive raised his dim eyes towards the deep night-blue overarching all, it seemed to him as if God mocked him with the same pitiless unconcern as those twinkling points of light. "O God, have mercy upon us!" he cried again. "What have we done that we should be tortured so?"

The clanging of a distant bell was the only answer.

"Sure it is all a mistake," he murmured. "God cares not for us, or there is no God. Rupert hath deceived himself with vain hopes of heaven, and will go to dust like the rest of us without being anything the better for his vain trust in God." The ringing of the bell sounded nearer, and a harsh voice echoed through the streets.

"'T is strange to fear death so greatly. Oh, if one could only know certainly whether it be the end of all! If it be God's wrath that hath lighted on us, wherefore should it fall thus heavily on Rupert, who liveth but to do his will? O God, O God, reveal thyself! They call thee merciful—give me some light, some comfort, or I shall go mad!"

The bell came ever nearer, a dim, smoky light shone at the bottom of the street, and the ominous cry, "Bring out your dead!" broke the stillness.

Harold pressed his hands to his eyes. "Christ, have mercy!" he cried. "Oh, save me, save me! Give me a little longer time to find thee! Oh, if thou wilt spare me, I swear to serve thee truly till my life's end. O God, forgive my sins! Slay me not in thine anger!"

The bell clashed now beneath the window. The rattling wheels stopped short, and louder than

ever came the hoarse shout, "Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!"

Involuntarily Clive looked down. The cart was almost full. The red torchlight gleamed on its hideous load, and it seemed to the lad that it was hours beneath his window. Backward and forward toiled the men with their ghastly burdens, from dim courts and alleys too narrow to be entered by any vehicle. The impatient horses stamped and shook their heads, but still their load was increased, while Clive looked on unable to move hand or foot to escape from the awful sight.

To-morrow night, perhaps, his body would be lying, waiting to be borne away by the same rough hands. To-morrow night he might be past all mercy and forgiveness, before the dread judgment throne of God!

Slowly the cart moved on; the clang of the bell grew softer; the awful cry of the driver died away in the distance; and Harold, sick with horror, sank down on the floor to beg and pray for mercy in a wild passion of fear. Death seemed to stand beside him. How could he tell? The agony upon him might be the beginning of the end. He tore open his vest. He thought he could feel little hard, round lumps upon his chest, and certain now that he had not six hours to live, he tried to fix his thoughts upon the Saviour, but could think of nothing but the dead-cart.

"Jesus, Christ Jesus, help me!" he cried. "Son of God, Son of Man, have pity!"

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me *hath everlasting life*," came clear and sharp to his consciousness as spoken words.

Hath everlasting life! What, life then and there in the plague-stricken city? Yes; a life that pestilence and death could never touch, everlasting as He who gives it.

"Lord Jesus," prayed Clive humbly and sadly, "I do believe. Oh, give me this life; take away my coward fear of death, and make me thy true, brave, and faithful servant!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE STING OF DEATH.

THE morning light streamed down upon Harold, asleep on the floor beneath the window. Mrs. Thurlow came softly in, put a pillow under his head, drew the curtain to shade him from the sunlight, and then went silently away.

An hour later the lad awoke. The house was strangely silent: even from the sick room came no sound. Was Rupert dead?

He was gently turning the handle of Rupert's door when it opened from within and Mrs. Thurlow came out. Making a sign for him to be quiet, she said softly, "God be thanked, Mr. Clive! The tumors is a-breaking, every one, and he is sleeping easy now. Mayhap he'll wake in his right mind."

Harold pressed her hand but could find no words to speak.

Some hours later she called him again. "Mr. Staynor's a-wanting of you, sir."

Rupert seemed weaker now than he had been even at the worst, for the false strength of the fever had left him. He could scarcely speak above

a whisper, but he was lying still, and for the first time in many days he recognized his friend.

"Dear Hal," he said, "how can I ever thank you for staying here with me? I feel as if I had been somewhere out of the world for months."

"Hath the pain gone, Ru?"

"It is better. Methinks I must have played the coward in my sickness. My good nurse tells me that you have had ill work to keep me from doing myself a mischief. Did I cry out much?"

"Sometimes. I wonder not at it neither, Ru. I have well-nigh cried out to see you."

"Doth the surgeon think I shall now recover?"

"But yesterday he said he would have good hope if the swellings would break. I shall send for him again to-night."

"Nay, bethink you, Harold, he hath so many folk to visit. He hath already told Mrs. Thurlow what to do for me."

"Well, I suppose one thing must be to permit you to sleep much, so I will e'en bid you farewell for the present."

Going downstairs, Harold walked up and down the passages in the miserably restless mood that sometimes seized him. The agonized frenzy of the previous night did not return and he was determined to try to keep the vow that he had made to be Christ's true servant; but now it seemed a hard thing that he had taken on himself. He was so weak and idle and pleasure-loving that he feared

he might fall back to his old life as soon as he should be put among the same temptations. Yet the thought of those riotous evenings spent with his wild friends filled him with disgust and horror at himself, and he could already thank God that he had been "shut up," and forcibly prevented from indulging in such sins.

Two or three days later they had lifted Rupert from his bed to a chair by the window, and Clive went up to sit with him.

"Rupert," he said suddenly, "the night after Forsyth saw you, I thought that the tokens were coming out upon me, and that I was dying. I prayed to God to pity me, and I heard as plainly as any voice could have spoken the words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.' Do you think it was indeed an answer to my prayer?"

"Ay, Hal. Thank God that he hath given you his life!"

"But, Rupert, the longer I dwell on it the more fear I have that I shall fall into sin as soon as I am tempted!"

"If God hath given you his life, Hal, surely you are no longer just the same as you were before you had it. Ask day by day for aid and guidance and it will certainly be granted you."

"Do you pray daily thus?"

"Ay, Hal, and many a time in the day; but I am no pattern for you. Christ himself will surely lead you."

Slowly the days of their captivity went by. The only events that broke the monotony of their lives were the nightly passing of the dead-carts and occasional visits from Horace Forsyth, who was working night and day. So many doctors were now dead of the few who had remained in the city that those who were still able to go about had no rest or leisure.

As the time of their release drew near, his visits became few and far between, and at last ceased altogether.

"Rupert," said Clive one evening as they sat beside the window, "if all goes well, we shall be free again next Monday. I wonder wherefore Horace hath not visited us for so many days?"

"They say the plague is increasing mightily throughout the city; perchance he hath not leisure to spend on us."

"Mayhap he is dead. I would that we could hear more certain news from Cheshire. Methinks some letters must have been written, but the distemper hath disordered all."

"Look! is not that Forsyth down below?"

"Yes. Halloo, Mr. Forsyth! Wherefore have you deserted us lately so entirely?"

"I have had no leisure for visiting and little enough for either eating or sleeping. My mother hath sickened, but is happily through the worst."

"Doth the contagion yet abate at all?" asked Clive.

Forsyth shook his head. "Nay; last week nigh on three thousand died. Some folk are trying to escape into the country, but the people of the towns round about will not let them pass."

"Small blame to them. Then there will be no escape at present, I doubt," said Rupert with an anxious glance at Clive.

"It will be difficult, but might perchance be contrived. I dare not linger now, for I have been called to one who is dying; but I will talk with you again of this matter. Have you been out yet?"

"Nay; we are shut up till Monday."

"But know you not that my lord mayor hath given an order that the well people shall keep within of nights after nine of the clock, that the sick may have liberty to go abroad for air? A wise plan it is too, for many an one hath died, I fear, of want of air and liberty as much as of the plague. I will bid your watchman open for you presently."

"Thank you. I doubt not I shall speedily regain strength," said Rupert. "The want of air and exercise is a grievous inconvenience to one accustomed to live much outside. I have been frightened lest Hal should fall sick solely of being shut up."

It was beginning to grow dusk in the streets when the bell of a neighboring church struck nine and the watchman opened the door.

"Doth it not seem strange, Hal, to be again abroad?" said Rupert when they had walked some distance. "Whither shall we go?"

"I care not. The streets seem mighty dismal. I would we had a link."

"Yonder is one in the distance. Ah, and a bell is ringing; it is the dead-cart! Is it safe, Harold, for you to walk thus abroad amongst all the infected folk? Look! yonder comes a fellow limping. His sores must be as yet unhealed."

Here and there little knots of people who were recovering from the disease had gathered at the street corners and were comparing notes as to their symptoms. Many of the women were crying bitterly as they talked, for they had lost husbands or children. All along the streets the houses locked up by their owners or shut up by the authorities looked dark and cheerless. Boards were nailed over the lower windows to prevent thieves getting in or their inhabitants getting out, and grass and weeds grew before many a door. Sometimes indeed broken windows and doors falling from their hinges gave an utterly forlorn and forsaken aspect to several houses in a row, for those who had once cared for them were dead and buried, or had contrived to escape the vigilance of the watchmen when their homes were turned into prisons.

The lads went on, Clive holding Rupert's arm, for the dusky figures wandering with uncertain

steps up and down the rugged streets filled him with apprehensions almost superstitious in their character. They looked woe-begone and ghost-like in the August twilight, with hideous plasters on their faces or white bandages swathed about their necks.

As they turned down a narrow street leading to the Strand, a frightful shriek rang through the dismal court with a suddenness so startling that Clive clung to his friend in horror, scarcely knowing what he did.

"Hal, let us go home," said Rupert gently. "Methinks we have had air enough for one night." But as they turned the corner they came close to the wall of St. Clement's Church. The dark tower rose sharply up against the fair, pure evening sky, but under the shadow of its gray walls yawned a fearful pit, beside which flared smoking torches, set to light the dead-carts to their journey's end. The noise of the wheels ceased as the lads came up. The men shouted to the horses, and the cart was drawn back empty. Clive turned away with a ghastly picture burnt forever into his memory. Men who had been wealthy and highly respected, women who had been fair, sweet children, tender babes, undistinguishable from the vilest of mankind, all huddled into one common grave, nameless and uncounted! Was there ever a more fearful lesson on the true equality of man underlying

all the vain distinctions of pomp and circumstance?

Clive felt it deep in his soul, but all the way home he spoke no word. Living, young, and beautiful as yet, within a few hours' time his corpse too might be lying there! How was he better than the beggar that had neither bread nor shelter to call his own?

"Methinks, Hal," said Rupert softly, "'t is a wondrous thing to think on the day of resurrection. Perchance many a glorious body will rise from that foul grave."

"Rupert, I cannot think on it. My mind mis-gives me. I shall never forget this sight."

"Nay; think rather of the springtime hereafter. He who can raise up beauty from sodden earth may clothe those poor decaying bodies with wondrous fairness. He works not as we do."

"As I stood there, Rupert, I was haunted with a maddening doubt whether there be a God indeed. How can he love us and let us suffer thus?"

"Sure I cannot answer you, Hal, if you ask wherefore he doeth this or that; and yet I doubt not that he lives, and is merciful as well as holy, because he hath so shown himself to me. Were I blind or in utter darkness, if your voice sounded in mine ears, I should know you were beside me. In like manner God hath spoken to my spirit, and I know he lives and loves us."

"One who believed not might say you put your own dreams and fancies in the place of proofs."

"Ay; and to such an one it would be hard to show that one doth not do so. God hath said that to those who do his will he will reveal himself. That is ever my comfort, Hal. Howsoever perplexing may be the doubts or fears or thoughts with which the devil vexes us, doth one but turn his back on them and set to the doing of God's will all is plain enough for the simplest child."

For several days afterward they went out little, for the night walks among the sick were very depressing; but at last the time came when they were free to do as they chose, and they began to consult about trying to get home.

"I am only frightened, Rupert, lest we should carry the sickness with us."

"Suppose I stay, and you go away, if you can contrive it. Perchance I may get some work to do while I tarry here. I will speak to Dr. Forsyth."

"Nonsense, Ru! if you stay, I will; but had we not better turn back? 'Tis growing dusk, and now 'tis needless to linger out until the sick are all abroad. Sure this must be Bow Street; I did not think we had wandered so far."

Keeping carefully in the middle of the road and avoiding all other travelers, they walked briskly down the sharply curved street, and nearly reached the corner where Will's Coffeehouse stood when a wild yet feeble cry for help startled

them. It came from a handsome house built close on the road, and was unlike the shrieks of pain that often sounded from infected houses.

"Help! help!" The words were not to be mistaken.

The house was marked with the dreadful cross, but there was no watchman to be seen. "Murder! murder!" cried the muffled voice again, and Rupert, hesitating no longer, rushed at the door. The padlock was not fastened and the key within not turned.

Rupert burst the door open and sprang in. Clive drew his sword and followed. A flight of stairs showed dimly in the light of a lamp that was left on the topmost step. As they reached the first floor the door of a bedroom at the end of a long corridor was flung open, and a man rushed desperately upon them, but the next moment Rupert had him by the collar, and forcing him to his knees dragged him toward the door of the chamber from which he had just issued, while he howled and begged for mercy.

"Let me pass, Ru," cried Clive. "Mayhap the man within is dying. Hold that rascal fast."

There was a light burning at the bedside, but as Harold entered a woman sprang forward to put it out. Clive was too quick for her, and seeing she could not reach it she turned and scrambled through the window out into the darkness. He listened in horror, expecting to hear her fall,

but was recalled to his senses by Rupert shouting, "Have the wretches murdered the fellow?"

The flickering candlelight fell on a mummy-like figure beneath the gorgeous canopy of the bed, swathed in a long white sheet; but the face was covered with a thick woolen cloth wrung out of water and folded many times. With a cry that brought Rupert to his side Clive snatched it off and disclosed to view the face of Sir William Wayne.

"He is dead!" cried Rupert.

"Nay; he still breathes. The villains have been trying to smother him. Have you let the murderer go, Ru?"

Rupert turned and rushed toward the stairs in time to hear the outer door clash on its hinges and the huge key grate in the lock outside. Once more they were prisoners, and finding he could not even shake the great nail-studded door with his utmost efforts he went back upstairs to Clive, who was still occupied in trying to restore the sick man. They feared to give him any of the medicines in the chamber lest they should contain poison.

"Methinks, Ru, we had best lift him to the window," suggested Clive. "The air might revive him; but let us take off this cloth first. Look how it is tied about his feet, as if they meant it for his winding sheet."

"Doubtless they did. Ah! here is another one

below wrapped round and round his arms till he can scarce stir a finger and so tight that I much admire he can breathe at all. Now, Hal, let us lay him on yon couch ; look, his eyes are opening already."

His breath came at first in gasping sobs and his eyes were dull and heavy ; but as he grew easier he began to look about him with a frightened and puzzled air.

"Be not alarmed, sir," said Rupert. "You are with friends. Let us lift him back to his bed, Harold ; mayhap he will sleep."

But there was no sleep for any of them that night, for Sir William was wild with pain and terror. The sight of Rupert seemed to send him into paroxysms of fear, and at last he was obliged to leave Clive to watch alone.

"He will murder me !" he screamed whenever Rupert went near ; then he changed his cries to piteous entreaties for mercy. "It was but in jest, sir," he repeated over and over again.

"Doth the man think I have come to avenge myself on him for his insolent mockeries?"

"Ay," said Clive ; "hearken to him ! No ; sure he cannot be troubled about you now ; it must be concerning some other !"

"I meant not to beat you, Samuel !" he cried. "I never thought it was you. I was overcome with wine and something excited, or I never would have hurt you nor the wench neither. She

will recover, Samuel ; it is but a sword-cut ! the doctor says so. Come, what will you take to pay for all ? I'll give you a purse of gold ; nay, ten purses, if that will satisfy you. Nay, Samuel, help ! help ! Keep off, you old hag ! Where is my sword ? I am not dead yet. Help ! murder ! What is this round me ? Loose me, you wretches, loose me, or " —

What need is there to write the fearful oaths that followed ? All night long the wretched man alternately shrieked for mercy and cursed his tormentors, while Clive sat at his bedside striving to ease and soothe him, and Rupert waited on the stairs without.

The first glimmer of light was in the east when Harold came out, saying, "Is the night watchman still there, Ru ?"

"Nay ; he hath not been near all night, and the other fellow hath locked us in so securely that I see not as yet how we are to break out. Besides, having come hither, mayhap 't is our duty to remain, lest we carry the contagion abroad."

"Ay ; yet if we remain thus without help, we shall be starved ; besides, Sir William is at the point of death, I fear. The nurse climbed out of yon window, but whither she went next I know not."

"Sure then I can do it, if you are not frightened to be left alone. I would stay, but I fear to drive the poor wretch mad."

"Nay; mine head was never steady for climbing. If you can find no other doctor, methinks Horace would come."

"Mrs. Thurlow will have been frightened for us," said Rupert. "I had better tell her how it all fell out."

"Ay; and pay her what is owing to her and bid her go home, Ru."

"Well, if I make haste, perchance I may return before folk are stirring in the streets."

He had no difficulty in escaping from the house, as a narrow ledge ran across its front and that of the untenanted dwelling adjoining, from which he contrived to let himself out at an open window below.

Dr. Forsyth was not at home, but leaving a message for him he hastened to St. Martin's Lane to acquaint Mrs. Thurlow with their change of plans.

"I was mighty frightened to be all alone last night," she said. "Just after you went out a man brought a packet of letters for you and Mr. Clive. He asked ten shillings for his trouble, and methought I had best pay him."

"Ay, indeed, ma'am; thank you! Where are they, please?"

There was one letter for Rupert and a great budget for Clive. He opened his own eagerly. It was from Madge, and she seemed painfully anxious about his safety. There was very little

news in it, but she begged him earnestly to come home at once, as Mrs. Staynor was ill with fretting about him, and his grandfather seemed to feel extremely the extra work which devolved on him. They had evidently not heard of his illness, but the reports of the plague which had reached them had been exaggerated at the time, though they scarcely come up to the truth now.

When he reached Bow Street again the people were all astir in the streets, but he found it was not nearly so easy a matter to get into the house as it had been to get out. Clive came to the window of Sir William's room while he was vainly trying to reach the ledge from which he had swung himself.

"Stay, Rupert!" he called in alarm. "Try not to pass that way. You will surely break your neck."

"Nay; be not affrighted. I will take good heed. Dr. Forsyth was out, but his mother promised me he should come at once, and I got some letters from good Mrs. Thurlow—a whole packet for you, and one for me from Madge."

"How are they all? Hath the distemper traveled thither?"

"Nay; but I fear grandfather and grandmother are both ailing."

"And Madge?"

"She says naught of herself, but she writes rather sadly."

"Rupert, you must go home. 'T is useless staying now to see Prince Rupert or the king, for every one is well-nigh mad with fears of the contagion; and I, if I live, will speak for you."

"Sure, Hal, you mean not to tarry here yourself!"

"Ay, Ru, I must for a time at least. Methinks God hath sent me hither."

"Horace Forsyth would know of some nurse who might be trusted not to abuse the poor fellow. Come home, Harold, as soon as we may venture, for the sake of the contagion."

Harold shook his head. "I have been thinking much this morning of what you said, Rupert, of doing of God's will, and sure I must believe that when he sent us here he meant me not to desert the man. 'T is strange how he clingeth to me. Twice this morning he hath started up in terror, and twice my voice hath soothed him and he hath laid him down again."

"Then, Hal, we will stay here together."

"Nay, Rupert, I have thought of all. Attempt not to enter this place again, but tarry for a few days longer at our lodgings, till the danger is abated of your carrying the infection in your garments; then take ship, if possible, and go home."

"'T is useless talking, Harold; I will not leave you here alone. If you stay, I must stay also. Suppose you should take the disease" —

"Methinks I shall not, Rupert. I am less

frighted of it now than formerly, and if God wills that I must die, to flee from my plain duty will not save me."

"It is my duty full as much as yours."

"Nay; your very presence drives Sir William frantic, and you are sore needed at home, while I have no home to think of. Supposing the distemper should break out there, what would they do, Rupert? and the doctors say that like enough it will go throughout all England before its fury is appeased."

"Care you not to look at your letters?" asked Rupert evasively. "Catch and I will toss them up to you!"

"Hearken, Ru, what Edith says: 'Methinks the squire is aging very fast since Rupert left; he looks so frail and feeble it grieves one to see him going about his work, and Mrs. Staynor seems to have lost heart entirely, and spends morning, noon, and night in fretting and weeping and bewailing herself. Madge hath a sore time. If Rupert can get home, he should come at once. Tell him, Harold, that I say so.'"

"Well, I cannot get home for some days at the least; for after passing of last night in an infected house, neither coachman nor captain would carry me hence."

"At the least, then, come not in hither to me. I will get nurses and watchmen in good time."

A week later, Rupert got a second letter from

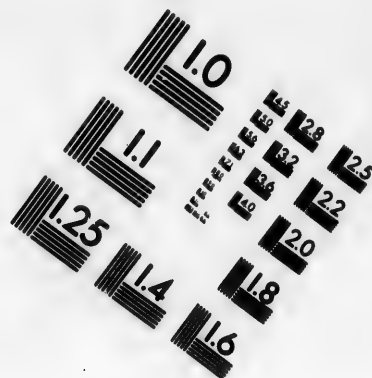
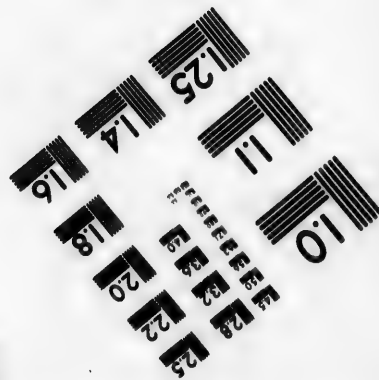
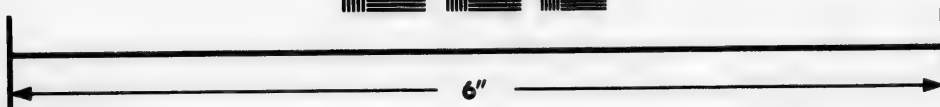
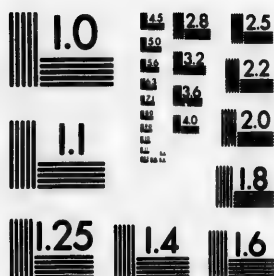


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Madge that decided him to go home, for he was now perfectly well and strong, and Clive promised to follow as soon as possible. It was not easy to escape from the city, but at last he determined to set out for the north on horseback, carrying what provisions he could with him, so as to avoid calling at the towns near London, as travelers were frequently driven back by the inhabitants from fear of the plague.

As he went through the streets to bid Clive good-by, he was surprised to see that very few of the plague-stricken houses were now watched or shut up, for the people were in despair of keeping down the disease by any precautions, and more than once he passed a dead body lying unburied in some dark alley.

"Harold," he said, "nigh on seven thousand died last week. I dare not leave you behind."

"There is a rumor, Rupert, that the plague hath broken out in some of the northern towns. Think how grievously helpless your grandfather and grandmother would be were Madge to sicken. They might die of want or misery. Indeed you ought to go home."

"How is Sir William this morning?"

"In grievous pain. God help him! his mind is so distraught with agony, he scarce can think of his poor soul. If I see you not again, Ru, bid them all farewell for me. Give Edith my dear love; and tell Margery that I know now that she

was right — this sickness hath taught me that I am nothing so great as I fancied myself."

"O Hal, it hath taught me that if ever man deserved the name of brave and true, it is you. Forgive me for having so mistaken you."

"Nay, it was no mistake. I am a coward still, but now I know that I am not alone. Farewell, dear Rupert. May God be with you, and lead you safe home!"

Rupert turned away, unable to speak, but looked back at the corner of the street. Harold was leaning from the window, fluttering a white handkerchief. A gleam of sunlight fell on his face; but Rupert could hardly see it for his tears, for he felt a miserable foreboding that he had bidden him farewell till they should meet again in the presence of God and his angels.

His journey to the north was long and eventful, but he reached home safely three weeks after he left London, and was welcomed by Margery and his grandparents as one come back from the dead. They did, indeed, need him sorely, but he could not overcome the feeling that he had ill-requited Clive's noble friendship by leaving him in danger in the stricken city, though at the time it had seemed necessary.

Meanwhile, Harold was spending weary, self-denying hours at the bedsides of the sick and dying. Rupert had not gone many miles upon his journey when Sir William became so ill that Clive

could see that he had scarcely an hour to live, though his pain was not so severe as it had been, and he seemed to understand what was said. From his broken words and muttered prayers, Harold hoped that in the last hour he had repented of his sins, and kneeling down he prayed aloud that He who had pardoned the thief upon the cross would forgive and receive this poor dying sinner even in his last moments.

The light was fast waning. Clive could scarcely see the face upon the pillow, but Sir William's ice-cold hand clutched his convulsively. The frightened nurse had fled to another room when she saw that death was approaching. The darkness deepened, but Clive prayed on, till with a faint cry and a short, sharp struggle, Sir William rose up in the bed and fell back dead.

Then, strangely in that moment there came back to Clive a miserable return of his old superstitious fears, though he was still upon his knees. A great horror of the dimly visible figure on the bed overcame him, but only for a moment. He groped his way downstairs, struck a light, and called the nurse. There was no doubt that Wayne was dead; and wrapping a sheet about his body, they carried him down into the hall; and as the gray light of morning dawned they heard the bell-man in the street.

Locking the doors of the desolate house behind him, Clive hurried to the doctor's house in Maiden

Lane, and for once Forsyth was at home. "I know not wherefore I have come to trouble you," he said, "only I feel something lonely, and the sight of a friendly face does one good."

"Come in. Breakfast is ready. Where is your friend?"

"He hath gone home; they needed him, but I could not leave poor Wayne. He died last night just after sundown."

"There was no hope for him from the first," said the doctor gravely. "His ill life had broken his health and strength. Whither are you going now?"

"I had thought of returning to my lodgings."

"I wish you could leave the city. The plague is increasing mightily upon us, and groweth more mortal every week. Scarce one in five recovers now, if taken, and it killeth ordinarily in two or three days."

"God help us! Surely, if it goes on at this rate, none in the town will be left alive."

"God ruleth over all," said Mrs. Forsyth gently.

"In his good time the plague will be stayed."

"Madam," said Clive slowly, "since I came hither I have been wondering whether you could spare me a room for a time. It likes me ill to lodge in this dangerous time apart from all friends."

"Ay; we have room enough," said Mrs. Forsyth; "but if you tarry here, you will be in constant

peril of infection. What say you, Horace? Is it safe?"

"I have been tending the sick during many weeks, so perchance I shall not suffer from the distemper. If Mrs. Forsyth will not find it an inconvenience to her, I will very gladly stay."

Thus it was settled; and from that moment Clive talked no more of trying to go home, though the pestilence daily increased in violence. All through September the people died by thousands, especially the poor who lived crowded together in the breathless courts and alleys of the great city. Business had long been at a standstill. Grass grew in the open court of the new Exchange, and the ships in the river lay with their sails idly furled, for no one would venture to receive a cargo from the port of London.

The few physicians still in town labored nobly but vainly to check the spread of the disease. Many of them lost their lives through venturing into the infected houses, but Dr. Forsyth toiled night and day, and seemed none the worse for it. At first he tried to keep Harold out of danger, but when he came in with a sad report of a poor child lying sick and alone in a tumble-down house in Moses and Aaron Alley, he could not forbid the young man's taking on himself the duty of tending him.

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least

of these ye did it not to me," said Harold when Forsyth objected to his willfully running into danger.

For two days the poor little lad hung between life and death. His father and mother had died before him; the poor house had been robbed of all it contained; and it was Clive who provided bed and bedding as well as food and medicine. It was Clive also who sat up through the long, gloomy nights, telling him the sweet story of Christ's love for little children, so that he might not hear the horrible clanging of the dead-cart bell. By the third night he could hear nothing, and before morning he was dead.

From that day Harold made no more attempt to shun the contagion, but went in and out among the infected houses, carrying life to many a poor wretch sinking from want of food and medicine, and comforting and cheering the dying with the glorious message of salvation.

One evening early in the autumn he was going slowly towards Mrs. Forsyth's house for a few hours' much-needed rest when he saw people wildly shaking hands and embracing one another, and he idly wondered what had happened.

"Have you heard the good news, sir?" asked Mrs. Forsyth as she opened the door for him. "Horace told me an hour ago. The plague is abating! The bill is less than last week."

"Thank God!" said Clive.

Yet for many a week to come he still continued at his work of nursing the sick and poor, for till the winter was well advanced hundreds died each month, and even in the following spring the plague was lingering in the dark, dirty lanes of the poorer parts of the town.

CHAPTER XVI.

TALK OF TREASON.

IT was midsummer again. A whole year had passed since Rupert's terrible illness, and he and Madge were walking together on the soft springy turf of the woods, returning slowly from a visit to Lady Elmer. Madge looked thin and pale, for the past year had been a very hard one. The money they had found in the abbot's grave had long been spent and they had been forced to part with all the treasured relics of former splendor, so that their rooms looked dreary and ugly now. But that was not the worst, for they had neither money nor food in the house and all their brilliant hopes of what the journey to London was to do for them had died away; indeed it seemed clear that the king would not help them.

"I wish it was all over and ended, Ru," sighed Madge. "I am so tired of living on thus day after day, having to plot and scheme for each morsel that we eat and yet never having enough."

"We have never really come short of our daily bread, and God hath sent even to us much to thank him for. Look at the golden light on yon

tree tops and the pretty rabbits at play on the slopes there! Methinks God sends us light and beauty and his gentle timid creatures that the earth may not be too sad, Madge."

"I am the sadder for them, Ru. The very sun seems to mock us in our misery."

"Nay, Margery, think what it is to be shut up out of God's free air and sunshine. We have at least these things (ay! and many another) though he hath seen fit to deny us pleasant food and easy lives."

"You may talk if it likes you, Ru; for mine own particular I see not that we have aught to be thankful for. No beggar in the street hath lived more wretchedly than we of late. Father and mother grow weaker every day; they cannot eat so poor food. Nothing remaineth to be sold either, but mother's picture. Oh, what shall we do? Nobody careth for us! Even Edith hath forgotten our necessities. I thought she would have given us something to carry home with us."

"I will go back and ask her for something!"

"Nay, Ru, better die than be a beggar!"

The lad walked on without a word, for he had an instinctive feeling that this was no time to talk to Margery of the almighty love of God.

"Father will die in jail and mother of her grief! Oh, what shall we do!"

The discussion ended as it always did with Rupert's remarking, "Something must be at-

tempted at once!" But there was no denying that their prospects were very dreary.

As they were crossing the moss Rupert looked cautiously round to see that no one was within hearing and said, "Madge, we are to have a meeting to-morrow in the old barn. I wish you would come with me. My Lady Elmer is going."

"Edith? she said naught of it to me."

"But she told me so. She hath lately come to think that Sir John is right. Have you not noticed that she hath cast off her unseemly gayety of apparel?"

"Nonsense, Ru! Edith will never give up wearing of her jewels and her brave dresses."

"Sir John says, Madge, that she hath come to see herself as a vile sinner" —

"Pah! you are learning to talk just like Master Kenrick."

"He is a worthy and noble servant of God, Margery, and I trust that my Lady Elmer will soon cease to be bound by this world's follies and vanities. She was with us at our last meeting for the first time."

"I am no such timid gentle fool as she, Rupert. Never think you can persuade me to join your secret meetings. I know they will bring down some fearful trouble upon us before all is done."

"If God wills it, we should be ready to suffer for Christ's sake."

"Yes, yes! that is like you fanatics all over.

I profess I should much like to hear why you account yourselves so different from the rest of the world. Sure if there be a God, he can hear you as well from yonder church as from your barn. To my mind the church is the worthier place of the two; but you gather yourselves together in such wild places as if you thought it sinful to pray under a good roof. Ay, and you revile those who differ from you as if you had special light from heaven vouchsafed to you alone."

"Madge, it is not true. Come with me once and see for yourself."

"Never, Rupert! I scarce know whether to believe in God or no; but *I* will not risk the bringing of trouble on those I love for any such doings. A year and a half ago you would not have done it neither, Ru."

"I tell you once more, Margery, that in the sight of God our meeting hath no harm. Never once have I heard a word of treason spoken there."

"It is because they think you soft and simple, then. I promise you Master Kenrick hath heard, ay, and spoken, treason enough. It is matter of common report that he is plotting to get rid of the king and to bring in government by the soldiers again."

"I can but repeat that no such words are true. Say naught of this to grandfather and grandmother, Margery. Go I must, for I am pledged

to it ; besides, Mr. Hartley is to make the sermon, and I would not miss it for the world."

At dusk on the following evening Rupert entered the old barn near the moss. There still wanted half an hour to service time, and the few people already assembled were chatting together in low voices. The lad took a seat in a lonely corner and began to wonder, now that he had carried his point and was here, whether he had not been selfish and unkind to insist on coming. He had asserted to Madge that it was his duty to seek the spiritual food and comfort that God had put in his way. He hated to seem timorous and half-hearted to those who had taught him the way of salvation ; but to-night, with unusual indecision, he could not be certain that he had done his Lord's will in coming to the assembly.

Half impatiently he tried to stop thinking of his perplexities, but he could not ; and at last he rose and joined a knot of men who were talking in whispers on the opposite side of the building. They looked at him and became silent. At last Kenrick, who was in the center of the group, said aloud : "Sure, good friends, we have no cause to feel ashamed of our words being overheard ; they are true. The king is a monster of iniquity, his court is a very Babylon, and the sooner this perverse, unclean, idolatrous generation is wiped off the face of the earth, the better hope have we that this poor realm may become,

like Israel of old, God's chosen kingdom. Oh! that we could have again one year of our noble and precious Oliver! But doubtless in his own good time and way our Lord will send us a deliverer. He hath searched and tried us in his judgments, as with fire, sending his plagues upon us and delivering us up captive to the evil will of strange children; but I trust the time of our redemption is at hand."

"Ay!" said another; "the darkest hour is ever before the dawn."

"Nay," answered a third; "I think not with you. Pestilence and warfare foretell the coming of the end. Our God hath had long patience, but be sure he hath looked down upon us in the fierceness of his wrath, counting up our foul iniquities till the measure of them be full. The people have gone madly after vanity and folly; our rulers, rioting in the daytime, have sold themselves to do evil, oppressing the widow and fatherless, turning away justice from the poor, and giving themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness. Can the Most High bear longer with us? Nay; I say his sword is already raised to smite; he will take away our place among the nations and make us even as Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Our day of mercy hath not fled, perchance. Mayhap the Lord hath yet seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal," said

Kenrick. "Oh, if the godly would but gather themselves together against the mighty! Had we but faith, even now the Lord might raise up a Gideon for us!"

"What mean you, Mr. Kenrick?" cried Rupert quickly. "You would not fight to put down these follies at court, would you?"

"Would I not? Did I believe that the Lord was amongst us, I would go forth to-morrow to gather his people together. Ay, I would gladly see this king of ours brought where his father was to answer for his crimes. But to my thinking neither the pillar of cloud nor of fire bids us go forward!"

"O good sirs!" cried Rupert, "doth not the Bible bid us honor the king?"

"Was not Israel bidden to slaughter the Canaanitish idolaters? Was not Saul condemned because his eye pitied Agag? I tell you, my young friend, that he who hath put his hands to the plow and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God."

With a sad, puzzled look at the shoemaker, Rupert turned away and went back to his lonely seat. His new convictions and his old ideas were at war. Whether Kenrick were right or his grandfather he could not decide; but now he *had* listened to treason. His face flushed with shame at the thought.

At that instant a young man came up to

him, saying, "May I speak a word to you, Mr. Staynor?"

"Nay; I tell you plainly, Robert, I care not to hear such talk."

"It is not what you suppose. It is your own private concern. You know, I doubt not, that the squire, your grandfather, hath been deep in debt these many years."

Rupert nodded.

"Ay; 't is common talk. Well, as I came hither I met Will Jacobs the constable, and he said he had a warrant for the apprehension of Mr. Staynor for a great debt. If it be true, the squire would do well to betake himself to some sure hiding place. Methinks the man hath a kindness for the old gentleman, and will make no undue haste in the execution of his errand."

"I thank you, Robert, for your kind care of us," said Rupert, shaking him heartily by the hand.

A few minutes later Sir John and Lady Elmer entered. Edith took a seat at once, but Sir John walked up and down talking to many of those present in whispers. Rupert could not help wondering whether he too might not be talking treason. However, he had not much time to give to these disagreeable meditations, for the service soon began, and the singing of the first psalm turned his thoughts away from his troubles.

The prayer that followed seemed specially

meant for him. It put into words his troubles and perplexities, and asked help for his deepest needs. Perhaps others thought the same, for there was not a sound or a murmur to be heard while the preacher's passionate voice rang through the building.

It had hardly ceased; they were still standing with bent heads and closed eyes, when the door was burst open, and with a horrible vindictive shout a number of rough-looking men rushed in with drawn swords in their hands. Some of the women fainted and many of the men turned pale. Two fellows tried to seize the preacher, but with a grim smile Kenrick drew a pistol from the breast of his doublet and one fell wounded. Rupert tried to go to Kenrick's help, but at that instant the lights were dashed out, and in the first moment of confusion his arms were seized from behind and bound together with a strong rope. He kicked and struggled violently, but being at such disadvantage was soon carried out of the barn and flung on the ground beside two or three companions in misfortune. For a while he lay half stunned by his fall, listening in horrible anxiety to the sounds of the conflict. Presently more captives were brought out, and one of them, in spite of his bonds, was so active that he contrived to knock the torches from the hands of his guards and to escape toward the woods. He was pursued by most of the men who had been set

to watch the prisoners, and Rupert contrived to scramble to his feet unobserved and to dart behind the shelter of a tree.

The next minute the other man was caught and was led by his captors within a yard of Rupert's hiding place. He heard them swearing loudly at him and vowing that they would "tie all the fanatics together by the necks, so that they could hang each other without further ceremony," and afraid lest he should be missed he did not wait to hear another word, but pressed deeper into the wood, stumbling miserably in the darkness. If he had been able to feel where he was going, he would have had little difficulty in finding his way; but to his dismay he discovered, after nearly half an hour's walking, that he was drawing closer to the barn again instead of going farther away. The shouts sounded near and the torchlight seemed close at hand.

Despairing of making good his escape as he was, he sat down and wrenched and struggled at the rope that bound him till it cut into the flesh. All his efforts but tightened the knot, and at last he resolved to hide among the trees till it was light enough for him to find his way to the hut of a dissenter who lived on the outskirts of the wood. This plan gave him hope and courage, and turning his back to the lights he tried to go straight forward, striking against the trees at every step in spite of his utmost care. He had

scarcely gone forty feet when he found himself facing the lights once more, and he had just concluded that he would sit still where he was when he heard a quick step close behind him. As it happened he had struck into the path again, and thinking it would be safer to crawl in among the underbrush he hurried forward alarmed at the crackling of the dry twigs beneath his feet, but more afraid to remain where he was. Alas! it was a case of "most haste least speed." He caught his foot on a fallen branch and fell with a crash into a large rosebush. The sound of hurrying footsteps came nearer; he dared not stir; he scarcely ventured to breathe. A dim figure passed him rapidly, and with incautious haste Rupert called softly:—

"Stop, sir, please!"

The man looked to right and left, began to run, then turned and deliberately came back.

"Who spoke to me?" he said.

"I, Mr. Hartley. Oh, please cut this cord!"

"Rupert Staynor! Where are you?"

For answer Rupert scrambled to his feet.

"My hands are fast," he said. "I have a knife in the pocket of my doublet. Thank God! I can find my way now."

"I cannot, Rupert," whispered his companion. "I have been lost in this wood for full twenty minutes. Methought mine own escape narrow enough, but yours hath been narrower."

"We can scarce say yet that we have escaped."

Presently they reached the Denham road, and Rupert breathed more freely, for the moon had risen bright and clear, and they could see that they were not pursued.

"Are many taken?" he asked.

"Ay; full half the assembly. Perhaps even more are made captive, for, cowardly as it seemeth to seek one's own safety at such a time, I could have done nothing to save them, and I fled before all was over. Alas! I do believe Obadiah Kenrick might easily have saved himself had he not come to mine aid."

"Where shall you go?"

"Can I but make shift to reach the abbey boundaries I have a sure hiding place that hath already served me well. Methinks, Rupert, you had best accompany me thither, for they are sure to seek for you at home ere morning."

"Grandfather too must needs go into hiding; the warrants are out against him for his debts. Is there room for three?"

"Ay, at a pinch," replied the preacher in a trembling voice; "and of the three your grandfather hath the best right to it; but, hark ye, lad! speak of me as little as may be in your account of this day's adventure. I will tell you why when we have leisure. I am sore grieved that Mr. Staynor hath fallen on such evil times."

"When shall we meet with you? Oh, would it not be periling your safety for our sakes?"

"Nay. Bring your grandfather to the three elms by Lady Ellen's well, within two hours after you reach home, and all will yet be well, I trust. I knew not, young sir, that the squire was in such straits."

"All the villagers know it, sir. One of them gave me the warning."

'Bring some provisions with you, if possible. The place is but ill stored.'

Little more was said until they parted at the turning to the abbey gates, when Rupert exclaimed, "Fair sir, can you not come to sup with us to-night? Our fare is poor enough, but you will be right welcome!"

"I dare not, Rupert — not now. Good-night."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN NEWGATE.

WHEN Rupert went to the meetings the door was usually left unlocked, so that he could let himself in without disturbing any one; but this time it was securely barred, and he was obliged to rap long and loud before any one heard him.

Madge came to open it at last, saying, "I have been so miserable, Ru, I could not go to bed, and I have opened the door so many times that I did not believe it could really be you now; but what is the matter?"

"You were right, Madge. Many an one hath been taken to-night."

"Oh, Ru! and you are all mud! and where's your hat?"

"My hat? I must have lost it. I 'ittle thought to escape."

Madge put her arms around his neck and kissed him again and again, then called herself "a little fool," and drew him into the hall where a large slice of bread and a bowl of milk were awaiting him.

"You look half dead, Ru, and your wrists — oh, what hath happened to them?"

Rupert looked at them and saw that they were marked with blood. "I cut them, Madge, with trying to break a cord they bound me with."

Madge turned pale. "Oh, Ru! How was it?"

The lad told his story in as few words as possible, ending with repeating Mr. Hartley's strange promise of a hiding place.

"What can he mean, Ru? Methought we knew this place as well as most folk."

"I know not, Madge. There was no time to tarry for questions. He hath promised to tell me all when we have gained his retreat; but should you not rouse grandfather?"

Madge agreed; but met the squire at the door of his room, coming to see if Rupert had come home.

"Father," she said, "Rupert hath been taken and hath escaped, and the preacher hath promised to lead him to a sure hiding place. Will you not go with him?"

"There is a warrant out against you, grandfather!" exclaimed Rupert. "Robert Thomson told me that Jacobs had it."

"God's will be done!"

"Ay, father! but tarry not here. Do, *do* go with Rupert."

"My child, I have long foreseen that I needs must end my life in prison. What matter a few days sooner or later?"

Margery looked at his quiet face in silent astonishment, then went without another word to her mother's room. "Mother!" she said, "mother, are you able to get up? Father is resolved on ending of his days in jail. Come and persuade him to go into hiding."

Mrs. Staynor was so nervous with her long listening for Rupert that she burst into tears; but Margery only repeated, "Come and let us get them away."

"I don't understand, Madge."

"A friend of Rupert's hath promised to hide them both, but father saith he will not go."

"Wherefore should he go?"

"For his debts, mother. Oh, if he is once taken, we shall never have him free again; and they say the prison is a most vile, wretched place. Why, mother, many a debtor is half starved, and *we* have no money to keep father with in Chester, or wherever they take him."

Mrs. Staynor shivered, but Margery went on: "Father would die shut up with all those fearful low men in that horrid prison. Mrs. Jacobs was telling me all about it one day. She says the debtors who are too poor to hire rooms for themselves live crowded together like sheep in a pen—the vilest, filthiest place! And they take turns to sit in a great cage over the street to beg for all who have no money. Fancy father *there*!"

Mrs. Staynor gave a sort of inarticulate moan,

but she followed Madge to the hall, which was now almost bare of furniture, and without the faded tapestry that had once covered the cold stone walls.

Her husband met her at the door, held her in his arms, kissed her ashen face, and spoke gentle, soothing words to her; but her trembling lips refused to speak the words she wished so much to say.

"Dear grandmother," said Rupert, "grieve not so. We shall, I trust, be safe."

"Go, Richard," she gasped at last. "Tarry not a moment; hearken! I hear voices coming this way."

"'Tis fancy, mother," said Madge. "I hear naught but the wind."

"Catherine, my love, I cannot leave you."

"Nay, but you must, Richard. I shall miss you sore, but it grieves me worse to have you here in danger."

"They will not come till dawn, methinks, if they do then. It likes them not to ride abroad at night instead of resting warm abed."

Margery drew Rupert aside, saying, "Think you, Rupert, that you were recognized?"

"I know not but you were right, Madge. This night, though I have never heard them do as much aforetime, they did speak somewhat that had the sound of treason!"

"Father," said Madge, crossing to where the

squire sat, trying to soothe his trembling wife, "Father, Rupert saith they did talk treason this night at the meeting. Indeed it is not safe to tarry so long. Oh, think if he were taken! he would be hanged and" —

She did not finish her sentence, for with a wild, pitiful cry Mrs. Staynor turned white as death and fell back in a faint. Margery's careless words gave her the impression that Rupert had confessed himself a traitor, and she seemed to see him suffering the horrible penalty of his crime.

They laid her gently on the floor, bathed her face and rubbed her hands, but she remained as still and stony as ever. "Rupert," said the squire at last, "I cannot leave her; but do you go at once, for your danger is great and pressing compared to mine. If I am able, I will be by the well by nine of the clock."

"Then I will tarry for you, grandfather."

"Nay. If you meet not Mr. Hartley at the time appointed, how shall we discover his hiding place?"

"'Tis scarce time yet, grandfather. Hark! what is that!"

"Some one in the court. I will go up to the tower and see what I can," cried Madge. "Rupert, father, hide yourselves somewhere! Oh, quick!"

But Rupert pointed to a man's face pressed

against the window and whispered, "It is too late! he hath seen us."

"Nay; if you can but once get among the ruins, all will be well. Oh, why were we so great fools as to let you linger here? Listen how they are beating on the door!"

"Open in the king's name!" was shouted from without.

"Try to get out by the kitchen way, Ru."

"'T is hopeless, Madge. We are caught in a regular trap. That door will not hold long."

"There's the chimney, Ru; it is wide enough" — but at that moment the door crashed open and a party of men rushed in. All this while Mrs. Staynor had lain in her deathlike faint, and the old squire had sat beside her like one dazed.

"Ah, my fine fellow, we have caught you at last!" cried the leader with a derisive laugh. "You have not gained much by your tricks, I can tell you. Come, you had best be quiet; clever as you are, you shall not escape again. So that old gentleman is your grandfather, eh?"

Rupert did not answer, but the squire came forward saying, "By what right, sir, have you forced your way into mine house at midnight? Show me your warrant, if you have one."

"That will I, sir, with the greatest of pleasure. You will find your own name in it as well as that of your hopeful grandson here. Like enough it will be a hanging job for both of you. Come, sir,

your little lass can look to the old lady ; but hark ye, my girl, fetch us up some wine or ale ! I am something thirsty ; hunting of fanatics is dry work."

" Father is no fanatic."

" That's as it may be, my pretty wench ; leastways he's got himself mixed up in the plot and must come along with us. Hurry with the liquor, my lass."

" I will bring the best we have, sir, but 't is poor enough," said Margery, humbling herself to propitiate the men if possible for the sake of the captives. " I have only ale, and a bit of cold fowl."

The men were hungry as well as thirsty, and though Margery brought out everything eatable that the house afforded, they were scarcely satisfied. Mr. Staynor meanwhile continued his unavailing efforts to rouse his wife from her swoon, but Rupert sat grim and silent in the corner, for iron fetters were locked on both wrists and ankles and this time escape seemed utterly hopeless. He felt vexed that Madge should spend these last few precious moments in waiting on the soldiers, though he knew that she was doing it for their sakes.

But at last she came to his side and whispered, " O Ru, you are going to be taken to London. Don't lose heart. Sure we shall get some one to speak for you."

" I fear not. It is all lies from first to last,

or they would not be carrying off grandfather too."

"Here, my lass," called out a man at the table, "give the poor lad a drink; he needs cheering up a bit."

"No; be still, Madge," said Rupert impatiently. "That grinning fool will drive me mad, making a laughing stock of me thus after having escaped him once. I wonder if he will carry us thus bound all the way to London."

"Ru," said Madge suddenly, "can you think now that all God allows to fall on us is right?"

"O Madge, are you too mocking of me at this sore time? I know my faith hath sadly failed."

"Nay, Ru, nay. Think you I could mock you now?"

"Then, Margery, I do believe that God hath sent even this, though I can scarce feel it. Look! grandmother hath opened her eyes."

"Now, sirs, are you ready?" cried the rough voice of the soldier.

"O fair sir, be good to them!" exclaimed Madge, throwing herself on her knees before the man. "I have no money, not even a shilling! or you should have had it; but be good to them! They are indeed as true to the king as you yourself. We have lost all for his sake."

"Ay, child, I'll not hurt them. I am obliged to prevent young master's overrunning us again,

but if the old gentleman will give us his word to come along quietly, he shall go free."

"I promise to give you no trouble," said Mr. Staynor. "I will make no attempt to escape."

"And if Rupert would promise" —

"No, Madge; I shall escape if I can."

"Well, that's fair warning," laughed the officer, "though methinks as yet I have the best of the bargain; but now, gentlemen, we must be gone."

Mrs. Staynor seemed scarcely to realize what had happened, but Madge clung passionately first to her father and then to Rupert as if she could never let them go. Tears of which he was ashamed dimmed the lad's eyes, but this time his captors did not laugh. They turned away to let him say his farewell, but he could think of nothing that he wished to say till he was jolting towards Horton in a rough cart that had been brought from the village.

They rested till daylight at the inn, and then they and Obadiah Kenrick and one or two other prisoners began their long, slow journey up to London. The rest of those who were taken at the conventicle had been sent to the county jail; and there was something alarming in these being singled out from their companions.

"Master Kenrick," whispered Rupert anxiously, "what hath become of my Lady Elmer and of Sir John?"

"I know not. Methinks they have escaped,

and Mr. Hartley also, I trust. Leastways they are not with us."

The captives were crowded together in a rough springless cart, while their guards were on horseback. Fortunately an awning protected them both from the heat of the sun and from the curious glances of the inhabitants of the towns and villages through which they passed.

In spite of his belief that God had sent this trouble on them, Rupert was soon so out of spirits that it cost him an effort even to answer when addressed. The weary monotony of each day's journey, ending at evening in the arrival at some new inn, where they were always the center of a crowd of laughing, curious people, and the restless, sleepless nights passed on the hard benches of the common room wore out both strength and patience. Every day escape seemed more out of the question, for he was getting stiff and weak; but plans for it occupied his thoughts unceasingly. His grandfather suffered less, perhaps because he had so long looked forward to this misfortune that the reality was little worse than the anticipation had been. He tried to inspire his companions with his own faith and hope, but he soon saw that they preferred to endure the hardships of their lot in silence.

Towards evening on the fifth day they reached London; and Rupert, cheered by the thought of a change in his condition, even though it were only

to a prison cell, drew aside one of the flapping curtains of the cart to peep out, taking care, however, not to be seen himself.

It was already growing dusk, though they were yet on the outskirts of the town. "Last year when the plague was at its worst," said Rupert, "Hal and I often walked up hither. One felt stifled in the city, not knowing but that every breath one drew might be receiving of the contagion; but out here among the fields and hedges it all felt fresh and pure. For a fortnight before I sickened they made great fires in our lodging, burning pitch and gunpowder till the house was filled with thick smoke."

"All these houses are new since I was last in London. Sure this must be the Holborn road. I wonder if they are carrying us to Newgate."

"Newgate? Methought we were bound for the Tower. Ah, yonder comes my Lady Shirley's coach. I would not for the world she should see me thus," said Rupert, hastily dropping the curtain and shrinking back into a dark corner.

A few minutes later the cart stopped with a jolt, and the train of rough men and coarse women who had followed it, making a straggling procession for some distance, now collected in a crowd to see the prisoners alight. Their guards had some difficulty in forcing a passage for them through the throng, all pushing and struggling to get a good view, but not too much occupied

to assail them with loud jeers and volleys of such missiles as cabbage stalks and rotten apples.

Richard Staynor held fast to his grandson's arm, for the lad was unnerved at the sight of the brutal, mocking crowd pressing so close about them. The flickering light of the torches gleamed one moment on a sea of savage, grinning faces; the next the great gate had clanged behind them, and they were within a roughly paved, dimly lighted yard, surrounded with gloomy walls of massive stone.

Outside the mob yelled and beat upon the gates, and within from a loophole high overhead came sounds of coarse laughter and snatches of ribald songs. Rupert shuddered and Mr. Staynor gently stroked his bent head, though he said nothing. A few minutes later they were conducted into a small, ill-smelling yard open to wind and rain, and there they were left till morning to sleep, if they could, on the dirty stones of the pavement.

Toward noon on the following day the governor of the jail came to see them, and, knowing something of Mr. Staynor's history, ordered him and his grandson to be removed to a cell over the city gate. He also released Rupert from his fetters, but he would not mitigate in the least the severities of the imprisonment of their companions in misfortune.

Their new room was small, gloomy, and almost

destitute of furniture, but through the heavy bars that crossed the narrow window they could look down on the life and bustle of the Cheap, and a fresh breeze blew pleasantly into their little cell.

A scanty meal of bread and water was brought to them soon after noon, but Rupert was so hungry that he could have eaten twice as much as had been allowed for him.

"Grandfather," he said, "I fear that we shall starve if they give us but one meal a day, and that one so light and unsatisfying."

"I will write a memorial to the king, Rupert. I think he will see that we have justice."

"I know not; methinks he cares not to be troubled with us and our losses. I would we could let Clive know that we have been carried hither."

"We will ask for paper and ink when the turnkey cometh in again, and perchance some one for charity will carry our messages."

There was no bed in the room, but that night the prisoners slept better than they had done since they left the abbey. When the first rays of sunlight stole into their chamber Rupert awoke and rising softly stood at the high window looking down into the street. The country folk were coming into market with full baskets of fruit and vegetables, and the lad began to think hungrily of their chances of breakfast.

The rattling of the heavy bolts outside the

door disturbed his meditations. Turning he saw one of the jailers enter.

"Are you a-wanting of breakfast?" the man asked. "Because I'm going out to buy some things for the gentlemen upstairs an' I can get anything you wish."

"We have no money, sir; methinks we shall be forced to live as we can on what the governor allows us."

"No money? then you are like to fare ill. Have you any friends in the town?"

"Ay. Could you not give us a sheet or two of paper and some ink and we will write to them?"

The jailer nodded and left them, returning presently with a dusty ink bottle, a worn-out quill pen, and a few sheets of paper.

Rupert stood up by the window, for they had no table, and wrote a hasty note to Clive, addressing it to the care of Dr. Horace Forsyth. Then Mr. Staynor took the pen to write to his wife and to the king, protesting that no thought of treason had ever occurred to them and begging that he would order their case to be looked into. "Perchance this may do some good," he said with a sigh.

"His majesty hath taken no heed to the memorial we sent by the prince."

"It may not have reached his hands."

"Perhaps not; I think he would scarce have treated us with utter contempt, but he seemed

unwilling to take much pains to do us justice, and they call us *traitors* now. I see not how we can disprove so vague charges. Madge blames me for going to the meetings, but indeed I heard nothing wronging of the king until that last unlucky day, and then I stayed not to listen. I am bitterly grieved to have brought you into trouble and disgrace with going of my own way. If aught ill happen to you. I shall never forgive myself."

"It doth not grieve me, Rupert, that God hath ordered it that we share the same prison. Sure we can comfort one another."

"Are you not hungry, grandfather? How shall we get bread? Think you they will let us starve?"

"Nay; though I doubt not we shall have to content ourselves with less than we desire. Many a poor soul hath lain long years in prison and hath known what it is to suffer both cold and hunger."

Rupert sat down in the corner on the floor and thought deeply. At last he rose and tied a piece of twine through a hole which he cut in the wrist of his glove.

"What are you doing, Rupert?" asked Mr. Staynor.

"I am endeavoring to earn our dinner."

Holding by the iron bars, he swung himself up to the window ledge and began to sing. He could

scarcely tell whether the people below the gate were listening or not, but at the end of his song he let down his glove. With his face pressed against the bars he could see that a gilded coach had stopped beneath the arch, and hoping that some pitiful lady might be within it he began again. Before the second song was finished he felt sundry tugs and jerks at the string he held, and when he drew up the glove it was half full of copper coins, and contained in addition a piece of glittering gold. "Here is our dinner, grandfather," he said triumphantly. "I had rather earn it some other way, but beggars may not choose."

The crowd still lingered, shouting for favorite ditties, but Rupert sang no more that afternoon.

"I wish the fellow would come!" he said. "I feel nearly hungry enough to eat my shoes."

About five o'clock the key turned once more, and Rupert begged the man to make haste and buy sufficient bread and meat for them and for their friends in the yard.

He took the money and promised to do the errand, but the room was beginning to get dim and dusky before he returned with a basket containing a loaf of bread, a few slices of beef, and a bottle of milk.

"Did you carry some to our friends?" inquired Rupert eagerly as he set the basket down.

"Ay; and they bade me tell you that you should

have their prayers," said the jailer with a grin in which contempt was mingled with amusement.

"Are they well?"

"Ay; well enough, if that preaching fellow, Kenrick, ain't sickening of the fever. Good-night. Pleasant dreams, young sir!"

They both enjoyed the meal, but Rupert was much distressed at the news of the poor old shoemaker's illness. Long after he lay down to rest with his cloak under his head for a pillow, he could not sleep for thinking of his friend in the vile courtyard below, lying fevered and restless on the stones and galled with heavy fetters on every limb. He fancied that his grandfather was asleep; and overpowered by the misery of the present and the gloom of the future, he lost all self-control and sobbed like a weary, frightened child.

"Rupert, my boy, what grieveth you?"

The squire's calm, quiet voice soothed him in spite of himself, and with a great effort he checked his sobs. "Pray to God to help us, Ru. He is as near us now as ever."

Days passed by, and still they were kept in close confinement, varied only by an occasional airing in the yard. Rupert became hourly more eager to escape, and more convinced of the hopelessness of attempting it. Clive had not been to see them, and they had heard nothing from the king. To his own bitter shame and sorrow, Rupert's patience failed him utterly, and as he

confessed to his grandfather, after a passionate outbreak of rebellion, he "could not be a Christian in prison."

"If that be true, Rupert, I fear you will prove but an unprofitable servant to your Lord."

"It is true ; I am an unprofitable servant ; nay, I am scarce a servant at all."

"And yet, my lad, you thought yourself strong enough to risk this and more for the sake of obtaining of that kind of spiritual food you thought the best."

"Grandfather, think you not that it might be easier even to die than to linger here so long ? Methinks at times I shall go mad with longing for fresh air and freedom. Yesterday I had a mind to knock down Timothy when he brought up our breakfast, and wrench his keys from him."

"Rupert, Rupert ! think not of such folly. Escape is impossible, and such ill-judged attempts as that are like to make you lose the little liberty you have. There are chambers underground, built in the thickness of the wall, where there is scarce room to stand upright or lie at length."

"I should die in so wretched a place."

"Nay, Rupert ; men can live for years so cramped. Have patience, lad ! tempt them not to treat you like some mad, ungovernable beast."

"They have no right to shut me up thus."

"Right or none, they have the power ; besides, my boy, you did break the law of the land, as you

know. 'T is neither wise nor just, to my thinking, but you broke it knowing the consequences, and will you now turn " —

"Faint heart and coward, you would say, grandfather. Well, I am grieved and shamed with myself. Full often I resolve to hold my tongue, but sooner or later, though I pray and fight for patience, I begin to rail at our persecutors more bitterly than ever. O grandfather, what can I do?"

"'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,' " said the old man reverently. "I know my chill old blood hath little sympathy with thine, but I remember how I vexed myself for many a year in the gatehouse at Westminster, and how at last I learned that even there God could teach me something of himself and his wondrous love."

"For many a year!" repeated Rupert with a groan. "Grandfather, did you bear it for many a year? and we have scarce been here two weeks. Oh, what a craven wretch I am!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HUMPBACKED PEDDLER.

MARGERY! Margery!" cried Mrs. Staynor in great excitement, "come hither quick."

It was three days after the squire and Rupert had been carried off, and Mrs. Staynor was crouching at dusk over a handful of fire on the broad hearth, for she still felt weak and ill after the shock she had received.

"What hath happened, mother?" cried Margery, running hastily down the turret stairs.

"I heard a step in the kitchen passage. I thought it was the bailiffs. O Madge! where shall we go? What shall we do?" and she broke out into a passionate fit of crying.

"Mother darling, don't! don't! I declare it putteth me at my wits' end. Oh, I wish we could go up to London to see the king or the prince. They would never let father come to hurt if they knew; and perchance they might even pardon Rupert for his folly."

"I wish we were all dead and at rest."

"I should be frightened to die, mother," said Madge, looking up with dark startled eyes.

"Mother, are you, like father, sure of happiness and heaven?"

Mrs. Staynor's eyes filled with tears, and throwing herself back in her chair she wept and sobbed for an hour, refusing to be comforted.

Madge was in despair, but at last, remembering that a spoonful of Lady Elmer's last present of tea was left in a small box in the kitchen, she went out to make a cup, for Mrs. Staynor always declared it did her more good than anything else. The kettle was on the fire ready boiling, but before making the tea she knelt down with her hands on the old stool beside the fire, and said aloud: "O God, thou knowest how much father loves thee! Oh, be good to him and Ru, and help us in our sore trouble!"

For a moment she felt as if an answer might come to her in articulate words; then she lit a candle and poured the water on the tea. As she set the cup on the table she saw with surprise a little odd-shaped parcel with her own name on it, and hastily pulling off the string she found within an old-fashioned purse containing several gold coins.

For a moment she thought it had come in answer to her prayer; but it must have been on the table all the while! The next instant it flashed across her mind that now they could go to London. She rushed into the hall, and with her usual impetuosity flung the purse into her mother's

lap, crying, "Look! look! now we can go up to London!"

"Where did you discover it?"

"On the kitchen table, with my name on it as plain as plain could be: Mistress Margery Staynor! Who could have left it there?"

"Mayhap it is Mr. Clayton."

"Nay; clergymen have few gold pieces to spare. Could it be the fanatics? They must be sore grieved, methinks, to see the trouble they have brought us into."

"Can it be Lady Elmer?"

"She is either taken or fled, mother. The castle is shut up and some folk say that Sir John and she have gone into France or Holland. I trust they are safe."

"Perhaps it is Mr. Clive."

"Nay; he would have come in to see how we did; but, however it hath come, do let us go up to London, mother."

"My child, how could we make shift to travel thither?"

"I could walk and you could ride. I have thought about it all. Plenty of people go at this time of the year; and doubtless we shall hear of some one who is going either from Horton or Denham."

"Madge dear, methinks I should die by the wayside. We shall never see them again."

"O mother! wherefore will you be so dismal

and sad? We must get to London in some fashion, for bethink you we may be able to save them if we be there in time. I shall go see the king and tell him all father hath done for him and how we are beggars for his sake."

"My child, you know naught of the ways of the court."

"I care not for that, mother. Harold says any one who will take no denial can have his will of his gracious majesty. I shall tell him that it is an infamous lie to call either father or Ru a traitor; and I shall beg him to forgive Ru's going to that conventicle."

"Ay, Madge; but 't is no easy matter to get speech of a king."

"Harold said he had spoken to him many times when he was playing of pell-mell or feeding of his ducks and swans on the lake in the park. O mother! at least let *me* go. I cannot stay here while they are in prison. The prince will help us."

"I fear he cares not to be troubled with our business. He hath done naught for us in spite of his promise."

"Mother, we know not that he got the letter. Do let me go; you could get Kate to tarry here with you."

"Nay, Madge; if you go, I will make shift to travel with you myself. If there were the least hope of our doing any good, I would contrive it somehow."

"I'll contrive it, trust me, mother. Oh, how ridiculous I am! I have forgot your tea!" and she ran into the kitchen to get it.

The longer Mrs. Staynor thought about it, the better she approved of Margery's plans. She lay awake all night meditating on it, and in the morning her daughter was astonished to find how eager she was that there should be no delay in putting it into execution.

"Will you go this morning, Madge, to discover how we may travel?" were the first words she spoke.

"Gladly, mother. I trust I shall have good fortune."

She inquired from all her humble friends in Denham, but no one knew of any one with whom they could travel; and then she went on to Horton and paid a visit to the landlady of the Rose and Crown, with no better success. She asked many questions about their misfortunes and spoke with special interest of Lady Elmer; but Margery could tell her nothing except what she knew quite as well herself. She could describe the "lonesome appearance of the castle," with the family and servants absent, and a "set of roystering soldiers" keeping guard over it, and she could tell how Sir John's papers had been seized and carried away all sealed up to London; and how he was "sure to be hanged, poor dear gentleman!" Then she began on Rupert's

wretched chance of escape, and talked of all the hangings and quarterings she had seen till Madge turned sick with horror.

"Why, Mistress Margery," she exclaimed, "you ain't eating a bite! Come, now, do try a egg or a rasher o' bacon. Well, my dear, as I was a-saying, I used to live up in London myself, and many's the pretty fellow I've seen hanged at Tyburn. One poor lad, scarce as old as Mr. Rupert, with the same look in his soft, dark eyes, I mind as well as if 't was yesterday. He'd stole a couple o' sheep, — leastways they said he had, — but he did make 'um the noblest speech of any man I ever heard. 'Tain't every man as can make a speech with a cart under his feet and a rope about his neck — but this lad spoke as beautiful as any sermon. Oh, I would n't 'a' missed it for ten pound!"

"It makes me sick to think of, Mistress Ward."

"So it do me, my dear; but there! if you've never seen a hanging, you don't know what you've lost, and 't ain't no use a-talking of it. Why, I'd go to Chester to-morrow if there'd be one."

"O Mistress Ward! I never thought you'd have been so cruel."

"No more I am cruel, my dear. Handsome young ladies like yourself likes to see a pretty man hanged, if he goes off Christian-like. Mr. Ru" —

Madge threw down her knife and fork with a clatter, saying passionately, —

"Don't talk of Rupert, Mistress Ward! Good-by. I'm sorry you can't help me."

"Now, my dear, be not in so great haste. Mayhap I can help you. You bide quiet at home for a few days and I'll see whether I cannot hear of some one going up to London that will carry you along."

"Do; there's a dear woman! We can pay something for the service, but not much. Make as good a bargain as you can, even if you hear of any one going but part of the way."

"That I will, my dear! Now sit down and finish your dinner."

For the next three or four days Margery was busy in making preparations for their departure. She washed and mended all their clothes and those that her father and Rupert had left behind, and made them up into bundles to carry away. She also packed up a great parcel of her father's most precious books and instruments, intending to leave them with Mrs. Ward.

At last everything was done, but she had heard nothing from the landlady, and she began to fear that their journey might be indefinitely delayed. Rising very early in the morning she took her mother's gruel to her bedside, and then set off for Horton.

She arrived at the inn about ten o'clock, but Mrs. Ward was so busy attending to a party of sportsmen who had come in for refreshment that

the girl had to wait nearly an hour before she could speak to her.

"Well, Mistress Margery!" she exclaimed, "you've come at last. I began to think you must have managed the business for yourself."

"No, indeed. Is any one ready to carry us to London?"

"Ay; there's a poor sort of peddler fellow that sells stuffs and ribbons and collars and what not, and he do come in here for a bite now and again. He was here one morning when I was a-telling of Sam Davy how set you was on going up to London and how I did know no one that I could trust to take charge on two lone ladies like you. Well, this fellow pricks up his ears, and says he, 'Mine occasions call me thither; I will carry up these ladies for whatever they choose to give.' Will you go with him, Mistress Margery?"

"Ay; if he be willing to take us."

"He is mighty ill-favored, but soft-spoken and thankful for any notice one takes of him, poor wretch! I promise you, your mother will be scared at the sight o' him. He is a great tall fellow with a kind o' hump to his shoulders, and he wears horrid black glasses over his eyes that hide half his face. Somehow, what with them and with his great yellow periwig, he hath much the look of an owl. Says I, 'Them glasses, good sir, do become you mighty ill.' 'Madam,' says he, 'methinks the glasses serve my turn well enough.'

'Is your eyes that weak?' says I. 'They are weak enough,' says he; 'and sure 't is wise to take care o' them.'

"When will he be ready, Mistress Ward?"

"To-morrow or the next day, as will best suit you; and I agreed with him for five shillings apiece, and he is to set you down in any part o' London you please. Is that right?"

"Thanks, Mistress Ward; it is a noble bargain. But think you it will pay the man?"

"That's his concern; he said it would. He promised to call here before eight o' the clock to-night to hear when you wished to set forth. I was a-wondering how I was to let you know."

"Tell him to-morrow by daybreak, if it like him."

"And when will you be coming back again, Mistress Margery?"

"Nay, I know not; but sure when I do return I shall come to see you straight."

Madge walked slowly home, and to her dismay found a strange, rough-looking man established in the hall as if he meant to stay. In answer to her indignant questions, he said that he was the bailiff's man and that he was there to prevent their carrying away any of their possessions. All Mr. Staynor's papers had been taken up to London already by the soldiers, but the man had been employing himself during her absence in ransacking the old chests in the tower and tearing down

the wainscoting in a fruitless search for traitorous letters.

Mrs. Staynor had retired to her bedroom and left him to do as he chose.

"O Margery," she cried, "why have you been so long away? A man hath been here all day, prying into every room in the place."

"I have spoken to him, mother. Never mind him. We will go away to-morrow morning early. A peddler will carry us up to town for five shillings apiece."

"In a cart, I suppose! That fellow hath torn open all our bundles, and he says we may not take aught away with us!"

"He cannot stop us. We have a right to take away our books and clothes."

But the man was deaf both to argument and persuasion. He would allow them to carry off nothing but a small bundle of their own garments.

It proved to be just as well, however, for they could not possibly have carried half of what Margery had packed up. She had been mistaken in thinking that they were to travel in a cart, for at the first streak of dawn their odd-looking conductor, with hump, spectacles, wig, and all, appeared in the courtyard leading three pack horses, whose loads seemed likely to make the mounting of the animals a difficult and daring feat. Mrs. Staynor in her younger days had been an accomplished horsewoman, and she by no means enjoyed the

prospect of riding the shaggy, rawboned animal which was intended for her use. The great baskets slung to the pack saddle were neither elegant nor convenient ; but after a moment's hesitation she allowed the peddler to help her to her seat amongst the bundles. To say the truth she looked nearly as odd a figure as her guide, though in a different way, for she was shrouded from head to foot in a long black cloak and a thick nun-like veil, and she sat in an attitude of stern, uncompromising dignity that accorded ill enough with the clumsy shape and shambling gait of her steed.

Madge climbed to her perch without assistance, greatly enjoying the prospect of the adventures before them, in spite of the objectionable panniers ; but when all the bundles had been stowed away and the peddler had mounted his own horse, she lingered in the court to look once more at the old gray ruins with their mingled memories of pain and pleasure. The color faded from her cheeks and the light from her eyes as she sat there in the sunlight, and she could not tear herself away till she saw that the queer peddler was waiting for her at the gate.

Mrs. Staynor had particularly requested that they might not pass through Denham village, and her guide, though he had merely nodded his head in assent, appeared to have given the widest possible interpretation to her desire, for all that day they rode through woods and byways, scrupu-

lously avoiding all frequented roads. At night they rested in a quiet cottage, far from any village, where their hosts refused all payment for their kindness except a few yards of ribbon from the peddler's pack.

"Sir," asked Margery on the second day, when they seemed to be pursuing the same plan, "how can you hope to do business if you so strictly avoid all populous places? Methought we ought to have gone through all the towns near by."

"Madam, my business is to get to London with all the speed possible. If I linger here and there haggling over stuffs and laces, we shall not see London within a fortnight."

Mrs. Staynor scarcely ever spoke, but Margery often tried to enter into conversation with the man, for his care for her mother had gradually overcome the dislike with which the oddity of his appearance had inspired her. Her efforts were not, however, attended with much success; he either seemed not to hear or answered her so briefly that she could make nothing of his replies.

Sometimes when the weather was hot and the road bad the peddler walked all day long to save his weary horse, and though Madge sometimes followed his example for an hour or two, he was far the better walker in spite of his deformity.

"You are wondrous strong, good sir," she said one day, when they had walked side by side for some time.

"You would say so if you knew all," he returned.

"Have you suffered some terrible accidents?" she asked.

"Ay; many. Wounds, shipwreck, and cruel imprisonments."

"Were you sick for very long? I have heard that the spine giveth fearful pain when injured."

"It doth, indeed."

"How did it happen?" asked Margery softly. "Were your eyes injured at the same time?"

"Madam, I cannot tell you about the business at this present moment."

"I have often wondered that you seem to see so well. Were both eyes hurt? and is it just because you are used to it that you so rarely lose your way?"

"Perchance it is so. I had thought of trying to sell somewhat in yonder village, but they told me last night it is sore smitten with the plague. But, Mistress Margery, had you not best mount again? This road hath ill repute for highwaymen, and it would like me ill to be stayed by them. Canst see any one amongst those trees?"

"Methinks I can," said Margery, her heart beating fast with excitement. "There are three men there, and oh! I do believe they have pistols."

"What shall we do?" cried Mrs. Staynor.

"Ride boldly on. Doubtless they mean no

harm. Perhaps 'tis but prentices out for a holiday."

They were received with loud and derisive shouts as they came on. Their appearance was criticized more freely than politely, and Madge as well as Mrs. Staynor was beginning to get alarmed. Their guide pulled up his steed to a walk, saying, "If you are fearful of passing yon fellows, we can turn back and go to Newton after all. They have something the semblance of footpads."

"I am rather frightened," admitted Madge, pulling her horse quickly round. "Mother, do make haste!"

"Now ride for your lives," cried their guide, urging his own beast to its utmost speed. "Ah, yonder fellow means to meet us at the corner!"

Margery looked back over her shoulder and was horrified to see that the whole party was pursuing them, while one armed with a great blunderbuss was crossing the fields toward the bend in the road. Shouts and curses sounded on the air, but the only one who was gaining on them in the least was the one with the gun.

"Let me pass," said the peddler coolly. "Me-thinks there is no cause to be frightened by one."

"But you have neither sword nor pistol," said Madge.

"Be not too sure of that, madam, though I deny not I should be loath to use them! Now ride

more easily; the rest are far enough behind, and I will settle with that young rascal."

The lad (for he was no more) had taken his stand at a sharp turn in the road and was shouting with might and main, "Your money or your life!" But the peddler rode on at the utmost speed of his clumsy horse, as if he meant to charge up the bank at the threatening youth. The would-be robber began to cast anxious glances down the road to see if his companions were in sight, and, seeing none, raised his piece and pulled the trigger. At first it would not go off, and he was still fumbling with it nervously when his adversary rode up within three yards of him. Rising in his stirrups he held above his head his heaviest bale of goods. There was a puff of smoke, a loud report, and just in the act of hurling his missile at the foe the valiant peddler was thrown from his horse.

But his deadly aim, aided perhaps by the terrible rebound of the overloaded gun, had laid the enemy low. His smothered cries from the ditch where he had fallen gave assurance of his safety, and Madge leaping from her horse hastened to the assistance of their champion. Alas! he was not unscathed: he had lost both wig and spectacles in the encounter, his cloak was torn to shreds, and his crooked shoulders had become mysteriously straight.

As he rose from the ground he looked with a

queer shamefaced smile at Madge. "Madam," he said, "your questions about me are well answered; but will you aid me to regain mine infirmities as speedily as may be?"

Mrs. Staynor sat stiff and still on her horse, but Madge made a puzzled courtesy; she knew the man, and yet she did not know him. But at any moment the lad might scramble out of his ditch, so there was no time to be lost. The wig and spectacles lay close at hand, happily undamaged by their fall; and they all breathed more freely when the face of their guide was hidden by its accustomed disguises; but the humped shoulders were a more serious matter.

The unsightly padding had probably saved its wearer's life, for the shot had passed completely through it; but it was difficult to replace it in such haste. However, with the help of a small bundle or two from the pack, Madge contrived a substitute for it, carefully draping the tattered cloak so that the rents might not reveal anything suspicious, and mounting again they rode on toward Newton.

"'Tis lucky the rest grew tired of following us," said Margery in a low voice to the peddler.

"I suspect they had higher game in view. I trust yon fellow hath received no serious hurt."

"If he hath, it may teach him a lesson. Methinks he meant to kill you! I hope he saw not

our operations after the disaster. But wherefore do you ride thus disguised, fair sir?"

"Methought you knew me. Sure there is good reason why I should endeavor to conceal myself. I was deeply grieved that Rupert came not with me to mine hiding place on that unhappy night."

"Ah!" said Madge, "I know you now. It seems scarce grateful, when you have been so good to us, to speak thus; but, oh, why did you lead a lad like Ru into danger?"

"Mistress Margery, I have not led him into danger. Rupert joined us of his own free will. Indeed I love the lad, but yet it seemeth to me not altogether grievous that he hath been counted worthy to suffer wrong and shame for Christ's sake."

"Ay; I might have foreseen that you would tell me that I ought to be thankful for this cruel misfortune. It is the way with all you fanatics — pardon the word, good sir! — one and all you take so strange, unnatural views of all that befalleth either yourselves or others."

"Because, madam, we believe that naught can happen to us against our Father's will, and we know that that which seemeth most untoward is full oft the richest blessing. Dear lady, I would to God that you could rest yourself on God's great love!"

"Reverend sir, I scarce know whether there be

a God—how can I trust his love? Oh, if it be true and if he be indeed so kind and loving, methinks he would not be thus hard to find! 'Tis not my fault that I so wander in the dark. I have longed and prayed to be like father, whose life is so holy."

"If your wish was single-hearted and sincere, it will indeed be granted," said the preacher in a slow, sad tone; "but beware lest you deceive yourself. You cannot be like your father unless you are willing to take upon you Christ's easy yoke, and to give up your own will to your Lord's. Have you thought upon this, Mistress Margery? Are you truly ready to seek after meekness and gentleness, to mortify your ill tempers and vanities, to forgive as you have been forgiven, and to cast yourself humbly on God's mercy, remembering that in his holy eyes your noblest works are nothing worth?"

"Sir," said Margery quickly, "you are just as bad 'as Master Kenrick. I deny not that my life hath been sinful enough, but—but"—

"It likes you ill to give your whims and follies the ugly hideous name of sin. Dear lady, in the olden days he who was defiled with leprosy was driven forth from amongst his kind, and if by chance he met man, woman, or child, he had to stand aside, crying out, 'Unclean! unclean!' I saw a leper once upon my travels. His flesh was dead white and dropping from his bones like that

of a foul and loathsome corpse. I never before saw so horrid and awful a sight ; but God himself hath likened sin to leprosy, and doubtless to his pure sight your soul looks full as hideous as that poor wretch's body did to me."

Madge shrugged her shoulders and tried to laugh as she said, " Truly, good sir, if it were not your profession to call us by ill names, I should think your gruesome talk something insulting ! Pray, how then doth your own soul appear, if mine be so ill ? "

" Perhaps, lady, you think to entangle me in setting up of myself above my fellows ; but I will even answer you. Mine own soul is fair and whole before God because his Son hath healed and cleansed it by his loving sacrifice ; yea, it is clad in the beautiful robe of his righteousness. "

" But now you spoke of my vanity, good sir ; yet in mine humble judgment even professors seem not to be wholly free from this small vice. "

" Neither they are, madam. Every day of this weary pilgrimage I bring bitter shame on him who hath called me by his name ; and yet like a tender father God looketh on me with love and great delight, because for Christ's sake I am become his child. "

" Sir, your speech is in riddles. How can you shame Christ Jesus if your soul be indeed so white and clean ? "

"Like many another truth, dear lady, it is hard to make clear to one who hath in his own breast no answering sense of it — and yet perchance I may explain my meaning by something of a parable. Two merchants, having each much business in all parts of the world, joined together, and one staying at home bought and sold for both while the other did likewise in lands beyond the seas. The first, a wise and prudent man, brought wealth and honor unto both at home; but the other, vain and foolish, gained an ill name for both abroad. Now Christ hath condescended to represent me in his father's house and there his glory overshadows me, while here he hath put his name upon me and hath bidden me so walk that his love and goodness shall be known throughout the world; but oftentimes, alas! I drag his glory in the dust and gain for him a name of ill repute."

"Look!" said Madge suddenly. "We are close on Newton now; but methinks I see a red cross on yon cottage."

"Ay; it is shut up for the plague, doubtless; but, madam, before we turn from the subject of which we have been discoursing let me charge you as you seek happiness and flee from sorrow to ask God to send into your heart the spirit of repentance and meekness. Methinks this journey on which we are bound is full of danger, and perhaps we shall not see the end of it."

"Sir, it is useless to seek thus to terrify me.

Sure if God wants me, he will turn my heart to him. Indeed, indeed I have tried to believe."

"He will not force you to be his; but if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Thus speaking he passed on, and they rode through the long street of the village in single file.

It was evening nearly a week later when they reached the outskirts of the great city, and their guide found them lodgings in an unpretentious but clean little house on Watling Street.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

MOTHER," said Margery the next morning, "I have been thinking that we had best go to see Prince Rupert. His house is on Beech Lane, they say, off Aldersgate Street. I am sure he will help us to get speech of his majesty."

"I wonder whither they have been carried! Perchance our good friend the peddler would inquire for us."

"Nay, mother; it might cost him his liberty. Leave it to me."

They dressed themselves as well as their scanty store of clothing would allow, and set out early on their long walk. The rough pavement tired Mrs. Staynor's feet so that she could scarcely drag herself along; and the hurry and bustle of the town kept her in a state of nervous agitation equally painful to herself and to Madge. She fully expected to be run over every time a coach passed in the narrow way; but they reached their journey's end in safety.

The prince's house was neither handsome nor large. A bow window adorned the front, gables of different sizes rose from the steep roof, and

diamond-paned lattice windows were thrown open to admit the cool morning air.

"Are you sure you have made no mistake, Madge?"

"Nay; this is indeed his house. He hath never been rich, mother."

The lackey who answered to their summons looked curiously at their dusty shoes and travel-worn attire, and scarcely deigned to attend to their message. "His highness never sees folk at this hour," he said curtly. "He is busy in his laboratory."

"We must see him, young man," said Margery haughtily. "Tell him at once that Mrs. Staynor desires to speak with him. *Mrs. Staynor*—do you hear?"

"Tis as much as my place is worth to disturb him!" grumbled the man.

"Go!" said Madge; "our errand is of great importance."

"Be still, Margery," said her mother, taking a silver coin from her purse and placing it in the servant's hand. "I am sure, my good man, that you will carry our message to your master."

The fellow took the silver and went in, but returned after a quarter of an hour's absence, saying, "His highness do not wish to be disturbed; I told you so."

"Did you say Mrs. Staynor desired to see him?"

"Ay; and he said he was busy and would n't see the queen herself — not if she begged for him to come out on her bended knees, he would n't."

The walk back was far more tiring than the walk to Beech Lane had been, for the sun was hotter, the streets more crowded, and themselves utterly hopeless.

Mr. Hartley had taken lodgings in a different part of the town, fearing lest his presence might bring danger on Mrs. Staynor and her daughter. Madge felt very lonely, for she knew no one with whom she could consult. At last she induced her mother to lie down and set out to the Strand to Clive's new lodgings, hoping that she might find him at home.

Her red hood was faded, her shoes were patched, and her gray homespun gown was anything but fashionable. She felt the poverty of her attire all the more keenly when she turned into the streets where the richer people lived. As she reached the house and let the clanging knocker fall she shrank into the shadow of the doorway, for a coach magnificently painted was just dashing up the street drawn by four gray horses.

"Nothing for you, my wench!" said the man who opened the door, without waiting for her to speak.

"You saucy fellow!" exclaimed Madge indignantly. "Is Mr. Clive within?"

"No, he's not, my pretty lass; and a good thing too. All the beggars in the streets come a-plaguing of us since he played that fool trick of sick nursing. Get you gone, missis! We want none of you beggars!"

"William!" cried a voice behind her, "how dare you speak so insolently? Get *you* gone, sirrah! Margery, Margery! what hath brought you hither?"

Margery turned and held out both her hands, for it was Harold himself who was springing up the steps to meet her. "O Hal!" she cried, "I am so glad to see you!"

"Tell me everything," he said breathlessly, leading her into a pretty parlor looking on a cool green garden at the back of the house. "Hath aught ill happened?"

"It's the conventicle!" sobbed Madge; "father and Ru are both taken — for treason, they say — and we cannot find them, and no one will help us."

"We'll soon find them, Madge. I'll send William for a coach presently. Now tell me all."

The coach arrived before Madge had finished her story and Clive handed her in, saying, "Me-thinks, Margery, that they must be in the Tower. How would it like you to go thither by water? 'Tis a lovely afternoon for a row. To the Palace Stairs, coachman."

"Never fear, Madge; wherever they are we will

go to the king and beg him to do your father justice. I doubt not all will yet be well."

"How shall we ever thank you, Hal? Oh, I have been so proud to think we were your friends when we heard the noble things you did last year! Sure you saved Ru's life."

Harold's face flushed. "Rupert saved me from somewhat infinitely worse than the plague, Margery. I will tell you all some day."

"Is it true that you are a—Christian, Harold?" said Margery, who had been regarding him for some minutes of silence with keen eyes. Certain changes in his dress had struck her at once, for though his clothes were handsome and well made, they were of soberer hue and less fantastic cut than formerly, while the changes in his face were even more marked. His expression was graver and more thoughtful, and Madge thought sadder; but he had an air of manliness and decision that had been quite wanting in old days.

Now he looked her full in the face and answered, "Ay, Margery; thank God I am a Christian, though I too often grievously shame my Lord! Are you, Madge?"

Madge shook her head and asked, "Was it the fear of death that drove you to it?"

"I suppose it was; you know I have ever been a coward, and"—

"A coward, Hal! Nay! I do believe you are the bravest man that ever lived! Oh, it must

be easier to face death in battle against all odds than to tarry day after day and night after night in mortal peril of the contagion. I cannot bear even to think of it."

At that moment the coach drew up at the wharf, so there was no opportunity to continue the conversation; the next they were afloat on the broad sunlit river, and in spite of her anxiety Margery greatly enjoyed herself.

Behind them in the fast receding distance the gardens and galleries of Whitehall were washed by the silver water; and on the stairs they had just left were groups of gay court ladies and their attendant gallants going to take the air in pretty pleasure boats with awnings of all the colors of the rainbow. Sweet music floated towards them from a little boat following in their wake, and snow-white swans sailed with proud dignity up the stream. On the west the battlements and turrets of many a lordly palace rose dark against the clear blue sky, and terraced gardens flooded with sunlight came to the water's edge. At a turn in the river the distant pile of London Bridge came into view and the light flashed on fleets of boats coming up from the city rowed by merry prentice lads or anxious fathers of families.

"Why did you not come to see us in all these months?" said Madge.

"At first the contagion kept me away; then my Lord Enderby commanded mine attendance

and I have been with him nigh on two months while all the tedious law business connected with mine estate was brought to a conclusion. You know I am now of age."

"Yes; when are you to—I mean is the business of my Lady Liliastown also settled?"

"Ay; and my Lord Shirley is my good friend, though I told him the plain and simple truth, much to the distaste of my worthy guardian."

Great warehouses with narrow lanes and dismal courts between threw deep shadows on the water and the bridge was close before them now. The tide was coming freshly in and meeting the downward force of the stream; the water boiled and surged between the narrow arches as if it would break them down. It was strange indeed that they had borne the strain so long, for mills and shops, towers and houses were built from end to end of the old bridge and the narrow road was arched over with wooden props from house to house.

The swirling water looked greedy for victims; the arch was dark and narrow, but the boatman knew his business and shot through the dangerous passage safely. "I have shot London Bridge at midnight in a higher tide than this, but it is a true proverb that it is built 'for wise men to go over and fools to go under.' Look; now you can see the Tower."

"Methought it was one great building," said Margery.

"Nay; it is more like thirty than one. 'T is an ill place. I have rowed many a worthy gentleman in who hath been cruelly troubled to get out again. Yon is Traitor's Gate!"

Madge looked up at the dark frowning archway with a sick feeling of misery as their boatman pulled up to the stairs, and Clive led her to the Spur Gate; but the officer in charge, after making inquiry, assured them that their friends were not within, adding, "Mayhap, sir, you will find them at Newgate. They carry many of the fanatics thither."

It was getting late in the afternoon, but Madge could not resist the temptation to accept Harold's offer of taking her to see if the squire and Rupert really were confined in Newgate. "I am grieved if they are there, Madge," he said slowly, "for though I have never been within it I know it is a most wretched place."

It was nearly five when the coach stopped at the prison gate, and it took nearly another hour for Clive to persuade and to bribe the jailer to admit them. When at last he consented, Madge clung fast to Harold's arm, for she was terrified by the gloomy, rock-like walls and the horrid singing and shouting of some of the prisoners in the distance.

After the close narrow stairs and passages the cell itself seemed comparatively light and airy. Clive would have stayed outside, but Madge

drew him in, then flew to her father and flung her arms round his neck, kissing and crying over him till the poor old man was utterly bewildered.

"Father! Ru!" she cried, "I don't know what to do! Oh, I am so glad to see you! Oh, what a wretched room! No bed, no table; how can you live?"

Rupert spread his old cloak on the floor and begged her to take a seat, but she was too excited to be still.

"Rupert, you look woefully thin," she said; "I trust they are not as sparing of their food as their furniture?"

"Well-nigh as bad; but I have hit on a famous plan for earning of our living, Madge," said Rupert lightly. "I climb to yon window ledge each morning when the street is busiest, let down mine old glove through the bars, and sing to obtain wherewith to pay for our necessities."

"Have you had no dinner, Ru?"

"It is nigh supper time," he said evasively. "We are not hungry; are we, grandfather?"

Madge sprang up and shook and rattled at the door till Rupert laughed merrily. "Methinks, Madge, you have forgot we are in prison. Our door doth not open from within."

"It is a wicked shame! I shall go to the king and tell him so."

"Have you heard aught of Sir John and your sister, Harold?" asked the squire.

"No, sir. I knew not anything had gone wrong till I saw Margery to-day."

"How did you contrive to travel up hither, Margery?" said Rupert.

"Mr. Hartley came up with us in a strange disguise. He hath been a very noble friend to us. I promise you not to think so ill of fanatics again; even mother hath learned to love him and lean on him. 'Tis quite a grief to her that he hath judged it safer for us that he should not lodge in the same house."

At that moment the key jarred in the lock again and the jailer gruffly requested the visitors to withdraw.

"Margery," whispered Rupert, "there is one great thing you can do to comfort me."

"I would do anything for you, you know."

"Then ask to see Obadiah. They say he is sick, and I fear lest they are starving him."

"I will, Ru, though I had rather do anything else. Good-by! I trust to bring mother hither to-morrow."

"Hal," she said as they descended the stairs, "Rupert begged me to see his friend, that strange old fanatic, Obadiah Kenrick; think you it can be managed?"

"Yes; I hope so. I will speak to yon fellow."

Five minutes later Madge found herself locked into a narrow yard, open to the sky save for a rough shelter of boards in one corner. Among

the wild-looking, unkempt, ragged, dirty men, whose fetters clanked at every movement, she did not recognize Obadiah till he spoke, for he was lying propped up in a corner.

"Are you sick, sir?" she asked pitifully.

"Nay, my lass, scarce sick; but I am growing old, and the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. If it had not been for that lad Rupert, methinks we should have all starved. He hath sent us bread and meat daily, though how he hath come by it passeth my judgment to discover."

"He hath been cruelly distressed for you, and he hath sent me now to hear from your own lips whether you have indeed received the things he hath sent."

"Ay; daily, my lass; praise God! Truly He will not suffer the wicked one to prevail against us."

"O Master Kenrick, can you still think that God cares for you in this vile den?"

"Ay, child. Doubtless our Father sees chastisement to be needful for us, and though it is bitter to flesh and blood, I believe that some day I shall know how good it was for us to be thus mocked and imprisoned, and spitefully entreated. Sure, my maid, I count myself happier now in my gray hairs, in this miry pit, than ever I was in my boyhood, when I walked free over the sweet green hills; for I know that I have a Friend, to

whose love all things in earth, ay! and in heaven also, are nothing worth."

"O sir, once I was angered at your praying for me; but will you forgive me, and pray for me now, sometimes?"

"My maid, a day hath not passed since first you came under my roof, in which I have not entreated the Lord to be gracious unto thee and to turn thy heart."

Margery turned away with tears in her eyes. "How can folk be so cruel, Hal?" she exclaimed as they drove away. "Tis strange those who have ordered this can ever be happy, night or day."

"It is sad indeed; but, Margery, I will strive to get these good men removed to better quarters, and I have given orders to provide food for all, and some other comforts for Mr. Staynor and Rupert. To-night I trust they will have beds to lie in."

Mrs. Staynor was getting anxious at Margery's long absence. Mr. Hartley had called and was on the point of going out in search of her when she appeared. They all had supper together in Mrs. Staynor's rooms, eagerly discussing plans for the release of the captives.

"I will not rest," said Clive, "till they are free. Think you, Mr. Hartley, that it would aid them to engage a lawyer to look into the matter?"

"I fear it would not aid Rupert; because, alas!

't is plain enough that all we who have attended the meetings have broken the law. Perchance for Mr. Staynor a lawyer's help would be the surest."

"Let us appeal to the king," said Madge. "He cannot have forgotten all we have done for him. Oh, I am grievously disappointed in Prince Rupert. Methought he would have stood our friend."

"But if the king will do naught?"

"Then, mother, we must plan some way of compassing their escape secretly."

"Might not that be the surest plan?" said Clive. "All I have is at your service, madam, and one at least of their keepers loveth money singularly."

"For mine own particular, the plan of entreating his majesty's pardon likes me best," said Hartley. "I have broke prison twice, but nevertheless I should scarce care to try it again unless in instant peril of death. The risk is too great; for if the plan halts in any part, the prisoners are sure to be retaken, and to be condemned to much greater severities than before. Besides, Mr. Staynor is something old and feeble to endure the hardships of hasty journeys and long lying in hiding."

"Well," said Madge, "if the king will do naught in the matter, we can then try the other plan afterward."

"Think you that Mr. Staynor would dislike to

travel to America? I have friends there and can warrant that he would be safe among them from all enemies," said Mr. Hartley. "Madam, could you bear to leave all — home, country, and friends — for the sake of living without fear of your husband's imprisonment?"

"Ay, that I could; but how could we live?"

"Rupert is a brave lad; he would do nobly in that young country, and — I myself own some hundreds of acres in New England and a house which might make shift to shelter you till something better could be devised."

"But, sir!" exclaimed Madge, "we could never repay you for all!"

"I do not desire to be repaid, Mistress Margery. It would be my greatest happiness to serve you."

"Know you, sir, that I have never sympathized with the Dissenters? Nay, I have even hated them," said Mrs. Staynor slowly; "and how can I take so great kindness from you?"

"Dear lady, we would not ask you to change your mind concerning us, save of your own free will," said the preacher; but his thin face was lit up with a quiet smile of pleasure.

"Sir," cried Clive earnestly, "when Mr. Staynor is set free he must choose between us. I too would gladly offer him mine house and all it contains."

"Ay; but he would ever be in danger of being retaken in England."

"His debts shall be paid."

"The laws against attending of conventicles would still be as cruel, and Rupert would run again into peril."

"Perchance Rupert might get a ship, and then he would be out of the way of danger."

"Methinks he would be happier in New England" -

"Gentlemen, you are both exceeding kind," interposed Madge; "but perchance we had best set them free first."

Clive took his lawyer to visit the captives on the following morning, but he shook his head over their case and seemed to doubt his ability to prove their innocence of the charge of treason, while Rupert of course could not deny that he had been present at several illegal meetings. Mrs. Staynor and Madge went to Newgate in the afternoon of the same day, and found the prisoners in a much more comfortable condition as to food and furniture, but rather depressed by the lawyer's talk.

"Never fear, Rupert," persisted Madge; "you shall be got out in some way. We had meant to go to the king this week, but Hal hath insisted on providing new gowns for us both, and they will not be ready till Thursday. He saith his majesty taketh great notice of such matters, and that if we are arrayed somewhat as becometh our condition, there is the better chance of his listening to our suit. Nevertheless I hate to leave you

wearying here while we are tarrying for the tailor to get ready our braveries."

"Hal must be spending half his fortune on us, I fear."

"Ay; it grieves me to put him to so great charges. He had a letter from Sir John this morning. They are living quietly at The Hague, and he desires Harold to go up to Cheshire to look after his estate. Edith is well, though they had a most toilsome and dangerous journey."

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE PATH OF THE FIRE.

MADGE! Madge!" called Mrs. Staynor in her ear. "Wake up, child! wake up!"

"Sure, mother, it is not yet morning," said Margery sleepily.

"Hearken!" whispered her mother. "What hath happened?"

Madge jumped out of bed and threw open the window. "'Tis a fire, mother, a good way off, that is all. I expect the folk are running to see it;" and she lay down again and slept till morning.

By daylight the street was crowded with carts laden with household furniture, men carrying pictures or mirrors on their backs, and mothers with children in their arms or clinging to their skirts.

"Poor souls!" said Mrs. Staynor pitifully. "I fear it hath been a very great fire."

"Ay," said their landlady as she came in to bring some milk for their breakfast; "three hundred houses are gone already, and the flames are raging more mightily than ever. God help us!"

Of his fearful judgments there is no end. Look how the smoke is pouring toward us ! ”

“ Think you we are in present danger ? ”

“ Nay ; I shall tarry here yet a while.”

“ Harold is sure to come hither to seek us, mother ; let us not be in too great haste to leave.”

Before the church bells had ceased to ring for morning service Harold appeared, and an hour later Mr. Hartley joined them. The latter’s dress was torn, he had lost his hat, and his face and hands were black with smoke. “ My lodging is burned to the ground,” he said. “ Truly the Lord is making London like a fiery oven in his wrath. The noise of the flames is most strange and hideous. Thames Street is one broad sheet of fire and the houses on the bridge are wrapped in flames.”

“ Had you difficulty in making of your escape ? ” asked Mrs. Staynor.

“ No ; save that mine hostess is a lone widow woman with many children, and the little ones could travel but slowly. But, dear madam, do not tarry here ! The fire is coming on apace before a most fierce and violent wind, the houses are dry as tinder, and my Lord Mayor is well-nigh distraught. He saith he and his soldiers are spent with pulling down houses, and that the people will not obey him. They are indeed utterly dismayed, using of no manner of means to

quench the fire, but each man picking up all of his goods he can make shift to carry, and running off with them. Mr. Clive, think you not that these ladies had best remove whilst there is time?"

"Ay; indeed they had. Madam, if you please, I will send for a coach and carry you to my lodgings; there you will be safe. I trust."

"Dear mother, go with Hal," urged Madge; "but as for me, I must tarry here till I see whether the fire is in truth so close at hand. I promise to follow you shortly, but I can very well walk, and," she added in a whisper to Harold, "I am grievously frightened for father and Ru."

"There is no fear for them yet."

"I am not satisfied of that, Hal. Take mother away and come back here, or, if I am forced from here, I will flee toward the prison; perchance Mr. Hartley will bear me company."

But Mrs. Staynor refused to go alone, and no coach was to be got, so they all four walked to the Strand together.

At dusk the red light from the flames lit the whole city with its lurid glare, and volumes of smoke swept from the burning buildings. Mrs. Staynor soon went to bed, but Madge would not try to sleep, she was so full of fears for her father and Ru. If her mother had not positively forbidden her, she would have gone out to see for herself whether the prisoners were in danger.

"Hal," she said, "I am well-nigh frightened to

death for them. Oh, think you they will let them burn, shut up in those hideous dungeons?"

"God forbid! they will surely carry them elsewhere, if the danger gets very nigh."

"Then sure, Hal, we might have a chance to set them free. O Harold, could we not watch beside the prison? I will go up to mother and tell her all. I shall go mad to think of them."

"Mother, mother!" she cried, "give me leave to go. Think of father and Ru in the very path of the fire. The wind is as high as ever. Perchance we may save them if we are ready on the spot. Harold thinks they will be removed if the flames come nigh, and then we might be able to snatch them from their keepers."

Her mother at last consented to her going, for she was half bewildered between her terror and exhaustion and fears for her husband and grandson. At any other moment Madge would not have left her, but now her imagination was so impressed with thoughts of the prisoners scorching and suffocating in their narrow cell that she could think of nothing else.

"Make haste, oh, do make haste!" she gasped.

As they went further east the streets became more and more crowded with carts and foot-passengers. The air was thick with blinding smoke and a red glare shone on the windows of the houses and on the faces of the people hurrying hither and thither.

Madge breathed more freely when they reached Holborn Road, for though a frightened crowd was flying through the gate beneath the prison it still rose black and forbidding against the lurid sky. As they tried to pass through the dark archway, Madge was nearly carried off her feet by the throng pressing in the opposite direction, and Clive was forced backward more than once; but the preacher threw his arm round her waist and little by little they worked their way through the stifling passage to the street beyond.

"We are none too soon," cried Madge. "Look at yon wicked tongues of flame how they are rolling towards us."

"Methinks, Margery, they are farther off than you fancy," said Clive.

"I wonder if father and Rupert are still there. Can you see them?"

"Let us go farther from the wall. Now sure I can descry a face behind yon bars."

"Rupert! Rupert!" called Madge, going close beneath his narrow window again. "Rupert, are you there?" She called again and again; but if he heard and answered, the distant rushing of the flames and the trampling of feet drowned the sound of his voice.

"Mr. Hartley, tarry with Margery here and I will speak to the keeper, if I can find him," said Clive; but though he knocked on the great gate at intervals for half an hour, no one came to speak

to him. "The poor wretches within are horribly frightened," he said. "They are shrieking like madmen to the jailers to set them free."

"Rupert! Rupert!" called the girl again. "*Father!* are you there?"

"Ay, Madge," came faintly from the window at last. "It is a wondrous great and mighty fire. Methinks it is sweeping hither very fast." He added something which they did not clearly hear.

"Be not affrighted, Rupert," cried Madge again; then turning to her companions she exclaimed bitterly, "Alas, alas! but after all what can we do?"

"Margery," said Harold gently, "come to yon house across the way and rest there. Mr. Hartley and I will watch the gate, and if aught be to be done, we will call you."

Madge shook her head, but Mr. Hartley said gravely, "My child, indeed you must not stay here. Come;" and he took her hand and drew her away.

"I cannot rest," she said passionately. "It is my father in peril, sir, and they are but strangers to you!"

"Nay, Margery; you know not what you say. I promise to fetch you if there be any chance of your aiding them."

On Hartley's explaining how matters stood, the mistress of the house readily allowed Margery to rest on the seat of a window looking towards the

gate, and all night long she sat gazing on the driving smoke, the glowing sky, and that black pile of buildings.

In the morning Clive came to speak to her, while Hartley remained at the gate. "Have you slept at all?" he asked.

"Slept, Hal? Could you sleep in such a case? Oh, when will they open that door?"

"They are sure to bring them out now, soon, Madge. It is growing wondrous hot by reason of the nearness of the fire. The scaffolding is catching around St. Paul's. Mr. Hartley knoweth many an one in different parts of the city, and he hath collected five or six young lads, Dissenters like himself, who will aid us to rescue them."

"I fear much that they will be too well guarded. We shall never save them, Hal."

"I trust we shall. I have a coach in waiting close by. Fear not, Margery; but I must make haste. They may open the gate at any moment now."

"Hal, I must go with you. I will keep out of the way, but I cannot stay here. What time is it?"

"Nigh seven of the clock. Look how the sparks are flying! Sure there will be fire all around in a few hours' time. Ah, the flames are curling all about the tower of St. Paul's yonder! See how they shine through the smoke!"

The roaring and rattling of the flames were now

so loud that they could scarcely hear each other speak ; but still the prison gate was fast shut. The wind seemed like the hot, poisonous breath of the flames. Blinding smoke poured in their faces, and far and wide through the city flew burning fragments of wood. Ever and anon a dreadful crash sounded above the roaring of the fire, as the houses were consumed and fell, roof and all, leveled to their foundations.

That fearful day dragged on, the hours unmarked save by the increasing nearness of the flames, and added horror and confusion as the people left their dwellings and fled for their lives before the suffocating glow and heat. St. Paul's was burning now in earnest, and suddenly a great spark fell on the roof of the prison itself. Madge felt her senses reeling ; but at that instant the gate opened, and her nerves grew steady as she gazed. Alas ! escape for them was hopeless !

The prisoners were chained together in gangs, and surrounded on all sides by warders. In the very center of the procession marched Obadiah Kenrick, his rugged face showing plainly in the ruddy light ; but where were Rupert and Mr. Staynor ?

As the gate swung back, Clive gave a long whistle, and Hartley's friends started to his side ; but they could not get near the prisoners for the crowd, and the guards were at least two to one. It was hopeless and they knew it. Clive's sword

flashed out, but he never struck a blow, for he feared lest he might endanger the lives of the captives if he provoked a riot in that perilous time and place.

"Madge," he said, "you were right. It was vain to try to rescue them."

"Where is Rupert?"

"Rupert? Was he not with them, Madge? God help him if he be in there!"

The flames were sweeping close to the archway, but Margery rushed through the open prison gate with a wild cry. Clive followed her, but missed his way in the smoke and was obliged to return to the yard, where he met Hartley with a great axe on his shoulder.

"Where are they?" asked the preacher eagerly.

"I lost my way. Let us try again. Madge hath rushed in already. God help us all!"

A second later they found her beating wildly on the door of the cell with a great bludgeon that had been dropped by some jailer in his flight. The door was fearfully strong, resisting for several minutes their united efforts to force it; but it gave way at last and fell with a crash into the narrow cell. Rupert lay insensible beneath the window, through which streamed volumes of smoke, but the squire was nowhere to be seen, and with a bitter cry of "Oh, my father, my father!" Hartley turned and rushed down the corridor. Madge would have followed, but Clive caught her dress, exclaiming,

"Rupert will presently die if he be not removed into fresher air. I will come back to seek your father when Ru is safe."

Half carrying, half dragging him they got him down into the yard and in the air he soon revived.

"Now I will go!" cried Clive. "Look! there comes Mr. Hartley! Have you found him, sir!"

"No!" said Hartley. "Is Rupert better? Perhaps he can tell us where to seek him!"

"Grandfather!" exclaimed the lad. "He and several others were carried last night to the Tower. By what chance I was left behind I know not. Sure I had given myself up for lost. I suppose they forgot me, though I shouted at the top of my voice."

"Thank God that you are both safe!" cried Harold; "though I would that your father also were at liberty."

"Let us make haste away," said Hartley, "or we shall be unable to get through the streets. Yon house to the west is flaming now."

Before they reached the burning building in question, great tongues of flame had burst out of the windows of the opposite house, completely barring their way with a wall of living fire. The heat was insufferable, and the smoke bewildered them.

"Could we not make towards the river?" said Madge at last. "I feel as if my feet are scorching here."

"I doubt the fire lies betwixt us and the water," replied Rupert. "Had we not best travel toward Holborn, till we see our way more plain before us?"

But they were all so utterly exhausted and foot-sore that they were forced to rest as soon as they got out of immediate danger. They drank deep draughts of cool fresh water from a brook running through a field by the roadside, and washed their smoke-blackened hands and faces.

Madge lay down under a tree. The others thought she was asleep, but she was not. She was thinking how all their plans had been disconcerted. Suddenly a remembrance of the preacher's wild cry threw a flood of light on many things that had puzzled her, and, impulsive as ever, she sprang to her feet, flung her arms round Mr. Hartley's neck, and exclaimed, "You are Geoffrey! I know you now."

He had no idea how she had guessed his secret, but all he said was, "Yes; I am Geoffrey, little sister; but you must not tell our mother. I have caused her grief enough in my time and I would not have the old wound opened, even to learn whether she hath forgiven me. Rupert, Mr. Clive, you will not betray me?"

They promised, but Madge only said, "Oh, now I know where that purse came from. How stupid of me not to think of it before! Mother and I have often wondered concerning it."

"Nay, but say naught of it to her," entreated Hartley. "It hath been a great though sad pleasure to me to serve and protect her, though she knew me not. Oh, I would to God that I had been able to make clear to her that I disobeyed her not from lack of love, but because on my conscience I dared not fight for the cause I esteemed wrong!" Geoffrey's face looked white even in the dull red glow.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me!" said Rupert softly.

"That text hath been my only stay in many a time of sore affliction; and, thank God! it hath held me firm to the truth."

"Then you still believe as you did?" asked Margery.

"Ay; and ever more strongly as the years go on. But come," he added abruptly, as if unwilling to discuss the subject further, "methinks we had best be walking on. Mrs. — mother will be frightened for us, I fear."

"Stay," said Clive thoughtfully; "is there not danger of Rupert's being retaken? Had he not better hide himself somewhere, Mr. Hartley, rather than walk thus openly through the town? Perchance if we made toward the river, we might send him away into France or Holland till the peril be past. I wonder if yon fellow with the wagon would carry us on our journey? Halloo, sir! whither are you bound?"

"To Ludgate Hill. I have promised to fetch away some goods from a house there."

"I doubt you will scarce get through for the flames. The fire hath grown mighty raging and the wind is still fresh from the west," said Hartley. "St. Paul's was all aflame two hours ago."

'Will you carry us with you, sir?' asked Clive. "We are spent with walking, but desire to reach the river, if possible. I will pay well for the service."

After a little discussion he agreed to take them, but they had not ridden very far before they repented that they had ventured back into the streets at all. The air was filled with smoke and flying sparks, and the streets were so choked with people trying to carry away their goods, that more than once a block occurred, and they had to wait for many minutes before they could move on. It was growing dark now, and from churches and shops and houses toward the east rose "a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame." As they passed St. Paul's great tongues of fire were climbing up the square tower and curling round the graceful pinnacles that adorned the roof.

At Ludgate Hill they left the carter to do his errand and went toward the water hoping to get a boat to carry them home. All along the shore lighters were moored piled high with household furniture and guarded by servants. Every boat seemed to be employed; but after waiting a long

time they succeeded in hiring a man to take them to Whitehall Stairs.

The view from the river was magnificent but appalling. The flames from great warehouses filled with stores of tar and oil rose high into the dark heavens. The waters beneath glowed and flashed and flickered as if they too were on fire, while in the distance the smoldering ruins of London Bridge showed dimly through the heavy smoke.

Madge drew a long breath and said to Clive, who was beside her, "I was frightened for our lives, Hal, in those crowded ways so nigh the fire."

"I am more frightened for Rupert," he answered in a whisper, with an anxious glance at the boatman. "Sure we must make shift to send him aboard some outgoing craft before the morning. If he were but away, I should fear little for your father, for indeed he hath not even broken the law."

"Mr. Clive, I will take Rupert to a friend of mine on Drury Lane. He is a godly man and will hide him till it be safe to send him hence," said Geoffrey in an equally low voice.

"Ay; that would indeed be the wisest scheme. Think you it would be safe for him to bid Mrs. Staynor farewell?"

"Oh, I must say farewell to her!" exclaimed Rupert eagerly.

They found their temporary home in wild confusion, for the landlady was packing up all her more valuable goods for fear of the fire, and even Mrs. Staynor had busied herself with getting Clive's things ready for removal. They discovered her in the midst of a pile of bales and boxes listening nervously to the bustle without and within. "I was fearful that some evil had befallen you!" she exclaimed. "You have been so long away! Where is your father?"

"Indeed, mother dear, we could not help it. Father is carried away, but oh, they left Rupert behind! They forgot him, mother, and the place was burning!"

By degrees the whole story was told. Mrs. Staynor was bitterly disappointed that her husband had not also escaped, but Madge said cheerfully, "We will go to the king to-morrow, gowns or no gowns, and beg him to do father justice — only let Ru get safe beyond the reach of harm first."

But her mother refused to be comforted, and wailed over and over again, "Sure God hath been very hard on me. I am bereaved of my children and now mine husband is also taken away!"

"Mother," said Madge, with her eyes fixed on the ground, "I have had news to-day of Geoffrey. You are not bereaved of all your children!"

"Geoffrey!" she repeated wildly, grasping her daughter's arm. "O Margery, make haste, speak!"

"He fears that you might not be ready to forgive him even yet."

"Mother, mother!" cried the preacher in a choked voice. "I have come back to you, changed in many ways, but still of mine old opinion in the business which parted us. May I stay?"

Mrs. Staynor looked from one to the other in bewilderment. Then snatching the candle from the table, she held it close to Geoffrey's agitated face. To him it seemed as if that eager scrutiny would never end; to the others it seemed but an instant ere the candle had fallen from her hand, and she, once so proud and haughty, had flung herself at her son's feet. "My boy! my boy!" she sobbed, "can you forgive me? God hath punished me for my grievous sin."

Geoffrey lifted her from the ground. "Mother, dear mother!" was all he said, but he held her fast. She threw her arms round his neck, but her face was bent down. "My punishment hath been greater than I could bear," she murmured. "God hath taken from me the things I loved and valued, and the king himself hath despised us. O Geoffrey, Geoffrey, forgive my cruelty!"

The others crept gently away and left the mother and son alone together in the soft moonlight. What passed between them no one ever knew, but from that moment they understood each other as they had never done before.

"Margery," said Rupert, "I was grievously

dismayed to hear you speak of Uncle Geoffrey. I thought it was understood that we were to keep silence concerning him."

"I said not so. I was fully determined to speak," she replied with a rather self-satisfied air. "I detest mysteries and such-like follies."

All the next day, the fire still burned; Fleet Street was leveled to the ground; the wooden archway of Temple Bar was consumed, while on the other side of the town the conflagration raged up to the very boundaries of the Tower precincts.

"I greatly fear," said Clive, "that the whole city is doomed. Naught seems to stay the flames. On Tower Street they are blowing up houses with gunpowder, that the fire may have nothing to feed itself on, but I doubt that it will all be of no avail. The roof of the choir of the cathedral hath fallen into St. Faith's, and the stones therefrom are flying like grenades. 'Tis mighty dangerous to go near it, by reason of falling stones, melting lead, and the heat of the pavements. Methinks, Margery, we must scarce attempt to wait on the king to-day, for I hear that he hath busied himself greatly concerning this fire. We had best tarry till it is a little abated."

Two days later Margery went with Clive to see her father in the Tower, whither he had been taken. The roads among the still smoldering ruins were hard to follow and painfully hot to the

feet, but they went by boat for the greatest part of the way.

The squire was shut up in a small room in the White Tower, and Margery felt dismayed at the very sight of the building. Its massive walls and narrow loopholes gave it a terribly gloomy aspect. Even the inner walls which divided one room from another were ten feet thick, so that the chambers within seemed as cold and silent as the grave and as far from the living world.

Mr. Staynor had been very anxious about Rupert, but Margery could hardly answer his questions in her impatience to tell him the strange news of Geoffrey.

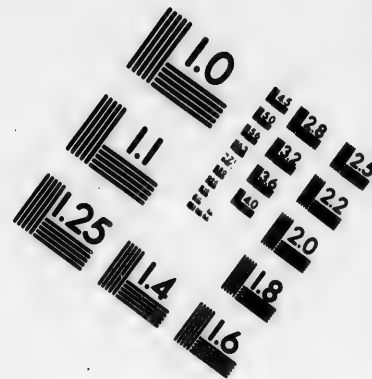
"Hath his mother forgiven him?"

"Ay," said Margery simply.

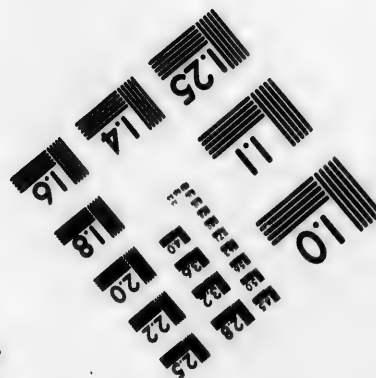
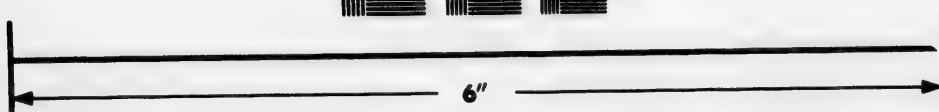
"Thank God! Methinks, Madge, after that I could well-nigh sing my *Nunc dimittis*."

"No, no, father! I trust you will soon be free and we shall be happy all together. Geoffrey wants us to go to America; he hath lands and a house in New England."

"Ah, well! if I am ever free again, we might think of it."



A resolution test chart featuring various patterns of horizontal and vertical lines of increasing frequency. Each pattern is accompanied by a numerical value indicating its resolution. The values include 1.0, 1.1, 1.25, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.2, 2.5, 2.8, 3.2, 3.6, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, 5.6, 6.3, 7.1, 8.0, 9.0, 10, 11.2, 12.5, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22.5, 25, 28, 32, 36, 40, 45, 50, 56, 63, 71, 80, 90, 100, 112, 125, 140, 160, 180, 200, 225, 250, 280, 320, 360, 400, 450, 500, 560, 630, 710, 800, 900, 1000, 1120, 1250, 1400, 1600, 1800, 2000, 2250, 2500, 2800, 3200, 3600, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5600, 6300, 7100, 8000, 9000, 10000, 11200, 12500, 14000, 16000, 18000, 20000, 22500, 25000, 28000, 32000, 36000, 40000, 45000, 50000, 56000, 63000, 71000, 80000, 90000, 100000, 112000, 125000, 140000, 160000, 180000, 200000, 225000, 250000, 280000, 320000, 360000, 400000, 450000, 500000, 560000, 630000, 710000, 800000, 900000, 1000000, 1120000, 1250000, 1400000, 1600000, 1800000, 2000000, 2250000, 2500000, 2800000, 3200000, 3600000, 4000000, 4500000, 5000000, 5600000, 6300000, 7100000, 8000000, 9000000, 10000000, 11200000, 12500000, 14000000, 16000000, 18000000, 20000000, 22500000, 25000000, 28000000, 32000000, 36000000, 40000000, 45000000, 50000000, 56000000, 63000000, 71000000, 80000000, 90000000, 100000000, 112000000, 125000000, 140000000, 160000000, 180000000, 200000000, 225000000, 250000000, 280000000, 320000000, 360000000, 400000000, 450000000, 500000000, 560000000, 630000000, 710000000, 800000000, 900000000, 1000000000, 1120000000, 1250000000, 1400000000, 1600000000, 1800000000, 2000000000, 2250000000, 2500000000, 2800000000, 3200000000, 3600000000, 4000000000, 4500000000, 5000000000, 5600000000, 6300000000, 7100000000, 8000000000, 9000000000, 10000000000, 11200000000, 12500000000, 14000000000, 16000000000, 18000000000, 20000000000, 22500000000, 25000000000, 28000000000, 32000000000, 36000000000, 40000000000, 45000000000, 50000000000, 56000000000, 63000000000, 71000000000, 80000000000, 90000000000, 100000000000, 112000000000, 125000000000, 140000000000, 160000000000, 180000000000, 200000000000, 225000000000, 250000000000, 280000000000, 320000000000, 360000000000, 400000000000, 450000000000, 500000000000, 560000000000, 630000000000, 710000000000, 800000000000, 900000000000, 1000000000000, 1120000000000, 1250000000000, 1400000000000, 1600000000000, 1800000000000, 2000000000000, 2250000000000, 2500000000000, 2800000000000, 3200000000000, 3600000000000, 4000000000000, 4500000000000, 5000000000000, 5600000000000, 6300000000000, 7100000000000, 8000000000000, 9000000000000, 10000000000000, 11200000000000, 12500000000000, 14000000000000, 16000000000000, 18000000000000, 20000000000000, 22500000000000, 25000000000000, 28000000000000, 32000000000000, 36000000000000, 40000000000000, 45000000000000, 50000000000000, 56000000000000, 63000000000000, 71000000000000, 80000000000000, 90000000000000, 100000000000000, 112000000000000, 125000000000000, 140000000000000, 160000000000000, 180000000000000, 200000000000000, 225000000000000, 250000000000000, 280000000000000, 320000000000000, 360000000000000, 400000000000000, 450000000000000, 500000000000000, 560000000000000, 630000000000000, 710000000000000, 800000000000000, 900000000000000, 1000000000000000, 1120000000000000, 1250000000000000, 1400000000000000, 1600000000000000, 1800000000000000, 2000000000000000, 2250000000000000, 2500000000000000, 2800000000000000, 3200000000000000, 3600000000000000, 4000000000000000, 4500000000000000, 5000000000000000, 5600000000000000, 6300000000000000, 7100000000000000, 8000000000000000, 9000000000000000, 10000000000000000, 11200000000000000, 12500000000000000, 14000000000000000, 16000000000000000, 18000000000000000, 20000000000000000, 22500000000000000, 25000000000000000, 28000000000000000, 32000000000000000, 36000000000000000, 40000000000000000, 45000000000000000, 50000000000000000, 56000000000000000, 63000000000000000, 71000000000000000, 80000000000000000, 90000000000000000, 100000000000000000, 112000000000000000, 125000000000000000, 140000000000000000, 160000000000000000, 180000000000000000, 200000000000000000, 225000000000000000, 250000000000000000, 280000000000000000, 320000000000000000, 360000000000000000, 400000000000000000,



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CHAPTER XXI.

MADGE AT COURT.

CLIVE had gone to see Rupert on board a small fishing smack which was to land him either in France or Holland; Mrs. Staynor was resting in bed after her recent fatigue and excitement, so Margery went out alone to buy herself a new pair of shoes. She walked slowly up the Strand and even went a little way into the desolate region of smoldering rubbish beyond Temple Bar before going to make her purchase. It was inexpressibly dreary, and she soon turned back to the crowded streets that had escaped the fire. St. Clement's Danes was thronged with homeless people, and confused piles of household furniture were heaped on the gravestones, for all the churches had been opened to receive those rendered destitute by the fire. Children were running from the Holy Well with pails of water, and women were busy sewing and washing under the shadow of the old church.

Madge forgot her errand in her interest in the scene. A coach stopped beside her and a gentleman alighted, but she did not turn her head till he spoke. "Mistress Margery Staynor, I believe?"

The girl looked up at her questioner in surprise and returned his bow with a deep courtesy.

"Have you been long in London? Is my namesake here?"

"Yes; that is — no. We have been in sad trouble, your highness."

"Ah, I am grieved for that, madam;" and the prince looked down on her so kindly that Margery was emboldened to say bluntly:—

"Sir, one day last week my mother and I traveled afoot to your house to request your aid, and the lackey told us with scant courtesy that your highness was busy in your elaboratory and would not see us."

"The impudent knave! He never brought me your message at all! But now what can I do for you?"

"'Tis only will you get us speech of his majesty? Rupert hath got into trouble like a foolish boy with attending of conventicles, and my father lieth in the Tower under a grievous and lying charge of treason. Indeed, your highness, he hath ever been true to the king."

"I doubt it not, Mistress Margery. I will carry you to him now, if you think fit to accompany me to Whitehall."

Margery looked at her shoes and thought of her dress; but decided that she had better go while she had the chance of being presented to the king by so distinguished a person, especially as it

would be a work of time to get new clothes just then.

The prince handed her into the coach as politely as if she had been a great lady, and Madge told him the whole history of their misfortunes, not excepting the sending of the memorial which as she suspected had never reached his hands. He asked her many questions, and promised to do his utmost to influence the king in their favor.

When they left the coach, Madge felt more ashamed of her shabby dress than ever; but the prince led her on through several long galleries, crowded with courtiers and statesmen and gayly dressed ladies, to a little waiting room, where he left her for a few moments. She had time to get very nervous with thinking of the ordeal awaiting her before he returned, saying,—

“His majesty will see you now, Mistress Staynor. Be not affrighted, but speak out boldly and plainly and I trust all will yet be well.”

To her dismay the room to which she was taken was almost full of gentlemen dressed in the richest and most fanciful costumes. Only one or two ladies were among them, and she fancied that a smile of amusement passed from face to face as she entered. But her tall guide led her up to a gentleman who was chatting merrily in the midst of a circle of gallants.

“This is the lady of whom I spoke, Mistress Margery Staynor, may it please your majesty.”

The king extended his hand, and the talking in the room ceased. Madge blushed up to the roots of her hair, as she made her courtesy and lifted her sovereign's hand to her lips.

"His highness hath told me that you have some request to make to me."

Madge cast a despairing glance at the gentlemen around her. "May it please your majesty" —

"Gentlemen, fall back a little. This lady desires to speak with me in private. Now, my child, what is it?"

"O sir," cried Madge, "it is that you will be pleased to pardon my father. Indeed, indeed, he hath done nothing wrong."

"Sure, if that be so, he scarce needs pardon. Tell me how it hath all chanced."

Drawing a step or two nearer, speaking very fast, and forgetting all the circumlocutions of court etiquette, Madge looked straight at the king and began at the beginning. She told him how her father had fought for King Charles I, how her mother had suffered their home to be beaten down by his enemies rather than surrender it, how her brothers had died for him — and the king was obviously touched. She drew a vivid picture of the life they had led since the Restoration, their debts and their privations, and she did not scruple to add that all was owing to their heavy losses in the time of his majesty's royal father.

She paused a moment, and the king asked,

"Hath my good friend Richard sent you on this errand, my pretty maid?"

"No, sir. At present he lieth in the Tower under a false and grievous charge of treason."

"Treason! how cometh that about, fair maid?"

"Indeed, your majesty may well ask; it passeth my poor judgment to understand the matter. It fell in this fashion: my father's eldest son hath left a son who is now well-nigh grown up."

"Ah, methinks I have seen the young spark—a handsome, likely lad too!"

"But the fanatics in our parts have gained some influence over him, and he hath several times attended a conventicle, though indeed he neglects not to go to church also each Sunday. He denies not that once he heard some foolish talking of ill practices there, though he neither joined in it nor listened to it; but that very night many were taken. Rupert escaped them once, but they followed him home, and carried off both the lad and my father, accusing them of plotting to work your majesty's destruction. Now, sir, indeed it is not true! His highness Prince Rupert knoweth him well. Oh, do be pleased to set him free!"

The king signed to Prince Rupert to accompany him to a recess, and said a few words to him in a low voice. The reply was not spoken so softly.

"Nay, your majesty; I should as soon doubt mine own loyalty as his. He suffered grievously in the troubles, and hath to my certain knowledge

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received naught in the way of reward or compensation. It were more fitting, methinks, to pay his debts and redeem his lands than to imprison him. He hath never been much of a soldier, but he is not the man to busy himself with plots of one kind or another. He is something of a philosopher and hath fitted up for himself a little elaboratory in the sole tower now standing of his ruined halls. If your majesty desires my counsel, I would have him presently set free, and" —

"Ay, my good cousin," laughed the king, "methinks it is his elaboratory that hath won thine heart. You philosophers are all hand and glove."

"Plain justice, sir, — ay, and a prudent regard for your majesty's honor, — demands that your friends should not be left to perish miserably of starvation or ill usage."

"Ay ay; true enough, I dare say; but doth your highness see how I am to prevent mine old friend's starving?" asked Charles impatiently. "This long war hath drained the treasury to that degree that if I venture to provide for a friend, all mine advisers cry out upon mine extravagance."

"Yet, sir, if you do naught for him beyond granting him a pardon, his affairs are in that sad condition that he will straight be transferred to a debtor's jail."

"Poor wretch! it doth indeed seem an ill reward for his great services. Mayhap if his debts be not

too great— However, we will see. Madam," he continued, addressing Margery, "his highness hath told me he is assured that the charge against your good father is wholly false. The business shall be looked into, and he shall be at once released if all prove as we think it."

Madge made a deep courtesy, murmuring, "I thank your majesty for your gracious kindness. When will he be suffered to go free?"

"To-morrow, perchance, or the next day. His highness will take charge of the business, I doubt not. As for the lad, think you he is an incorrigible fanatic, my child, that you ask no grace for him?"

Margery blushed again. "May it please your majesty, he hath escaped."

"Escaped! From the Tower! The lad must have both parts and courage!"

"No, sir; from Newgate, while it was a-burning. He was locked in a cell over the gateway, sir, and there forgotten."

"Ah! and where is he now?"

Margery hesitated; then said slowly, "May it please your majesty, I hardly know."

"Ay, and I'll be bound do not care to tell. Well, well, I'll not quarrel with you on that score. I owe a good deal myself to such convenient ignorance on the part of ladies. After the battle of Worcester some of mine escapes were so narrow that, 'pon mine honor, mine hair

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is ready to stand on end even now at the thought. Nay; if the lad's escaped, that's all about it. I dare say he will make shift to do without my pardon."

Margery still lingered, wishing but fearing to ask for a pardon for Sir John and Lady Elmer, and feeling that she ought to make an effort for poor old Master Kenrick.

"Sir, there's an old man in the jail" —

"Another friend of thine?"

"He hath been wondrous kind to Rupert, sir; and methought perhaps you would order that he too might be set free."

"What hath he done? Been a-preaching, or stolen a sheep?"

"At times he goeth to conventicles, sir; and Sir John and Lady Elmer, who also are in trouble" —

"My child, I cannot aid all your friends, though I am grieved to deny you. Farewell; I trust your father will soon be at liberty." The king held out his hand and Madge kissed it once more, understanding that he meant to bring their long interview to a conclusion.

She fancied that the courtiers looked at her with even more amazement than before as she went down the long gallery on the arm of her grave protector. A long mirror near which they passed showed her the odd incongruity between herself and her companion; and her gray dress and crimson hood did not contrast more strongly

with his highness' dark silk and gold lace than did her slight figure and youthful face with the stately height and stern features of the warrior prince. Nevertheless she was annoyed at the notice they were attracting, and a half-heard witicism caused her to draw herself up and march on with a dignified air that would have done credit to her mother, but sat rather ludicrously on her.

Suddenly a half-suppressed exclamation of "Madge!" reached her ears in a tone of excessive astonishment; but disdaining to look round lest she should make some mistake and afford the gentlemen and maids of honor an excuse for their diversion, she swept on unheeding.

The prince set her down at their lodgings after promising to see her father that very afternoon; but his coach was hardly out of sight when another drove up and Clive hurried upstairs. "What have you been doing, Margery?" he cried.

"Hal," she said reproachfully, "wherefore did you speak to me in that sudden fashion? You well-nigh made me laugh!"

"But what *have* you been doing, Margery?"

"I have been to the king to ask him to pardon father. It all came about by accident. Prince Rupert recognized me in the Strand and offered to carry me to Whitehall then and there. Oh, Hal, I do hope father will be set free! and the

prince spoke of his debts and said they ought to be paid. Is Rupert safely gone?"

"Ay; all being well he will be with Edith before Thursday night!"

"Hal, did I do wrong? I spoke of Sir John and Edith, but methought the king fancied I was presuming on his grace and straightway dismissed me."

"No; I trust it will not hurt them. I met the lawyer this morning and he told me that he hath great hopes that the charge of treason will be withdrawn. The witnesses can be shown to disagree amongst themselves, for there hath been no plot — naught but some idle talk amongst the more vehement Dissenters."

"Rupert said Master Kenrick had spoken much something like treason."

"Master Kenrick, Madge, is like to be beyond the reach of harm erelong; he hath the jail fever, I heard this morning, and can scarce live through the day."

"O Harold, is he dying? I would that I could see him!"

"It is grievously infectious, Margery. It might cost you your life."

Before the evening of the following day Mr. Staynor had been released. Prince Rupert brought him from the Tower in his own coach, but refused to come in to receive Mrs. Staynor's thanks. Madge did not suffer him so to escape,

however, for, rushing down to meet her father, she flung her arms round his neck and gave him one kiss, then turned towards the prince, who was re-entering his carriage, exclaiming, "Sir, I know not how to thank your highness for your wondrous goodness towards us. I shall never, never forget! neither will Rupert."

"I am grieved not to see my godson again. Will you tell him so, Mistress Margery, and give him this as a keepsake?" he added, slipping a ring from his finger and putting it into her hand. "Farewell; your father tells me he thinks of traveling to New England. May all good fortune attend you and yours!"

Margery courtesied once more, the coach rolled away, and she ran upstairs to hang about her father while he told all that had happened to them.

"The prince hath been most noble," he said. "He sat more than an hour in my cell yesterday endeavoring to arrange mine affairs, and he hath influenced the king to send me an order for a sufficient sum to pay the residue of my debts and to leave somewhat for our support afterwards."

"Then sure we can go back to the abbey!"

The squire shook his head. "Geoffrey and Rupert would both be in danger there. Madge, we must try our fortunes in the New World. We can be very happy there, I trust."

"But mother — how will she bear it? The life is wondrous hard, they say."

"She would go anywhere to keep her boys beside her — would you not, Catherine?"

"Yes; please God, Geoffrey and I will never part again."

"Doth it not please you, little daughter? Methought you loved change."

"Yes, father; and yet — and yet" — She did not finish her sentence, but, kissing his forehead, darted out of the room.

Half an hour later she returned and found that Clive and Geoffrey had come in. They looked very grave and Clive was saying sadly, "He died an hour ago, without much pain at the last, the jailer says."

"Who? Master Kenrick? Oh, is he dead?" cried Margery.

The news shocked and grieved her strangely, considering how much she had disliked him at one time.

"How sorry Rupert will be!" she said. She felt, and rightly, that they had both lost a faithful and warm friend in the rugged old shoemaker, and it grieved her inexpressibly to remember how ill she had requited his kindness. "O God, forgive me and answer his prayers for me!" she cried as she knelt beside her bed that night and thought of the lonely old man lying dead in his prison cell.

"Madge, can you spare a few minutes to talk to me?" said her father in the morning.

"Ay, father," she answered, perching on the arm of his chair and pressing her hand against her aching head.

"Harold told me last night something that concerns you very nearly, my daughter. He is mighty grieved at the thought of our departing" (a faint smile crossed Margery's pale face) "and he saith that he hath long loved you. He wishes to keep you here, Margery; will you stay with him or go with us?"

"O father, father, how can I choose?" sobbed the girl. "Could we not *all* stay here?"

CHAPTER XXII.

LAST WORDS.

TEN days later a large merchant vessel lay off the low coast of Holland, in the harbor of Flushing. Boats were plying backward and forward with messages and passengers, but the cargo was all on board. In another hour her broad sails would be spread and she would stand out to sea on her long voyage across the Atlantic.

The deck was piled with bales and packages in wild confusion, but they were fast being lowered into the hold, and those who had come to see the travelers off began to realize that the time of departure was drawing very near. In a sheltered corner, out of the bustle, a knot of friends were gathered close together.

"Oh," sighed Edith, "I could well-nigh wish we were going with you. I am grievously frightened for John while we tarry in England!"

"When are you going home?" asked Mrs. Staynor.

"Within a month or two, at latest. Harold says all will be well, but I doubt it. I know John will get into some trouble."

"Methinks," said Geoffrey suddenly, "I had

best tell him of the secret hiding place I had there. Edward and I discovered it years ago when we were boys together. I little thought then that it would prove so great a benefit to me. Close by Lady Ellen's Well in the park is a broad flag sculptured like an old gravestone, but much defaced, and raising that (you can get your hand under it in one place) you will see a flight of steps running down to a long tunnel. It is airy enough, for the monks who built it doubtless used it often. In one part it broadens out into a little chamber, close against what is called the abbot's grave, and from that point is another passage into the ruins so broken and rugged I never used it but once."

"Go on," said Madge. "Tell us about that time."

Geoffrey smiled. "Methinks you know the history of it better than I, Margery. It was the night you dug for treasure."

"There, Ru!" cried Margery triumphantly, "have n't I ever told you I *did* see something?"

"Ay; but how could you take Uncle Geoffrey for the abbot's ghost?"

"That is just what he looked like. I do believe he wore a flapping black robe of set purpose to horrify us—now did you not, Geoffrey?"

"I was frightened lest I should lose mine hiding place, for Rupert made as if he meant to break

down the wall between the grave and my dwelling."

"It is not a grave," said Rupert. "'Tis but a vault and methinks must once have been connected with your hiding place. Perchance I might have endeavored to break through had not Margery shrieked so awfully."

"Now, Ru, if you had seen him, you would either have shrieked or—fainted," she added with a quick glance at Clive.

Clive looked half vexed and half amused and said to Geoffrey, "Indeed, sir, it was your kindness that did the mischief. Had you left me where I fell, mayhap I might have followed Madge; but sure I thought you meant to do me some great hurt when you laid your hand upon me."

"Indeed I was sorry when I found whom I had disturbed in mine haste, but I could not confess mine error nor explain at the time without telling of my secret."

"Methinks I shall not so readily believe in ghosts again!" said Clive.

They all talked lightly, as people are apt to do at such times, till the very last moment. Then they broke down. At the best of times it is hard to say good-by for months or years, and they knew that many a danger overhung them all.

"God bless you, and carry you safe to your journey's end!" said Sir John as he grasped the squire's hand.

"I trust he will. He hath led me safe through numberless trials and temptations and I fear not that he will leave me now in mine old age. Hath he not said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'? All my life long there hath never failed one word of all his good promise."

"Yet," sighed Edith, "you have had more than many folk of grievous trials and troubles!"

"Dear lady," said the old man tenderly, "I have had no grief or pain but what the Lord sent me in deepest love, and with them he hath ever sent strength to bear them. If it be your lot to feel the weight of his chastening rod, he will surely sustain and uphold you; but grieve not beforehand, for many a storm cloud passes harmless overhead."

"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest," said Geoffrey in a low voice. "Methinks 't is a grand text for all of us."

"O Harold, I would to God I had a right to it!" whispered Margery as they stood a little apart from the rest, looking towards the broad ocean which would so soon roll between them. "In old days I scoffed at you, because, forsooth, I thought you had some lack of courage. Now I am frightened of all I do, either waking or sleeping, lest God should suddenly cut me off. I hate to make this journey lest I should

never see you or home again. I know not what hath come to me."

"O Margery, then go not! Return with Edith while you may. Your father doubtless would consent."

Margery shook her head. "Nay, Hal; I ought to go, and you know it. 'T will be hard enough for mother as it is. I scarce know whether I was right to say I would return within the year. Besides, indeed I am not fit to be wedded to a Christian man. Pray every day for me, Hal, that when I am your wife I may not be a hindrance to you. Pray that Christ will *make* me believe on him, for surely it seems as if nothing short of that will ever save me."

In old days Harold would have answered her with compliments, and told her that he loved her just as she was and desired no change; but now he was too much in earnest to say anything so untrue. "Margery, I pray for you many times a day, and I know, I *know* that the Lord Christ will make you into his true servant yet. Oh, why will you wait to see or feel some strange thing before you take him at his word?"

"I cannot help it, Harold. I cannot believe."

"Margery, say here and now, 'Lord Jesus, henceforth I will strive to do thy will.'"

"I dare not, Harold. Besides, how could it help me?"

"If any man will do his will, he shall know

of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' At least, Margery, promise me this: that you will try earnest, stedfast, patient doing of his will, till we meet again."

Margery was silent, looking with troubled eyes over the dreary waters.

"Hearken! they are calling us. It is the last thing I shall ask of you, Madge, for a whole long year at the least. Promise me, dearest!" he said, taking her hand and looking into her eyes.

Margery felt very sad and very hopeless about it all; but looking up at Clive's earnest handsome face, so full of love and sorrow, she could not refuse this last thing he was asking of her. She knew what she was doing. She knew that to do the will of Jesus meant to live a life like his, of untiring self-sacrifice. "I promise, Harold," she said solemnly.

"Thank God!" he said as he gave her a farewell kiss.

"Harold," called Sir John, "are you coming? They are waiting for us."

Madge dashed away the tears from her eyes and hurried to bid Edith good-by; but of all the many things she wanted to say she could utter none for weeping.

A few moments later the boat had cast off from the ship's side, the anchor was slowly hoisted on board, the great sails were spread to the wind, and the dear faces of their friends had become

indistinguishable in the distance, though they still waved their white handkerchiefs from the deck, till the boat was lost to sight among the busy craft along the shore.

They landed in New England before the white snow carpet came to cover the gold and crimson leaves fallen from the trees. Dark pines sheltered Geoffrey's log house from the fierce northern gales. The blazing firelight of the hearth danced on the rough walls as merrily as in old days at the abbey, and long before the bears and squirrels came out of their winter hiding places Mrs. Staynor felt happy and at home, undaunted even by the bitter cold and deep snow. Geoffrey's return had given her new life and she was no longer the fretful invalid who needed to be cared for and considered first of all. She took her place as mistress in the little house in the forest as she had never cared to do in the stately ruins of her old home; and Margery, as the time of her departure drew near, was glad that it should be so. The resolution and energy of Mrs. Staynor's youth were not quite dead after all; and they found abundant occupation in providing for a household, for which, according to early colonial custom, nothing was to be bought which by any ingenuity could be made at home. She sewed and baked, made candles and learned to spin, forgetting her languor and her nervousness in healthy work, and became daily more

unselfish and hopeful and humble. At first when she looked at Geoffrey she thought sadly of the bitter years wasted in vain anger and sorrow ; but by and by even the memory of the past could not break the sweet calm of the present, for the peace of God had dawned in her heart, which man can neither give nor take away.

Mr. Staynor fell even more readily than his wife into the new ways of the new country, though he missed his room in the old tower much more than he would allow. Happily, however, he soon made acquaintance with the minister of Mapleton, a learned and "curious" gentleman like himself, and in his society he spent many a pleasant hour of quiet talk on the wonders of God's creation. His freedom from debt and the fear of imprisonment which had pressed on him for so many years was an unspeakable relief to him. His trust in God, unshaken during the time of his trial, shone ever more brightly as he drew nearer to being with him forever ; and when at last his Master called him he lay down to die in joyful and triumphant hope of a glorious resurrection.

Geoffrey, with faith scarcely less strong, found life a fearful struggle against the evil within and around him. He could not rest in his quiet home, but when the summer work was ended he went forth to carry to the trappers and Indians in the woods the story of God's love, and his

passionate, earnest words roused many a soul to repent.

He never married; and when his father and mother were laid to rest under the shadow of the pines he cast all earthly ties behind him and from thenceforward devoted his life to wandering hither and thither, seeking the lost sheep who had never known the Good Shepherd's care. How many he brought into the fold he never knew; but his weary, toilsome journeys were not in vain. Even here his heart was gladdened with some tokens of God's blessing on his work, and hereafter he will doubtless receive an abundant harvest for his patient sowing.

Two years after Margery left them Rupert married a pretty, gentle girl. She was the minister's daughter, born and brought up in the woods; but she was both ladylike and well educated in a quaint, unusual fashion, for her father had taught her much of what chiefly interested himself, and Mr. Staynor soon loved her as dearly as his own daughter. The earnest discussions between the pair amused Rupert exceedingly, but he was very proud of his wife and wrote Margery glowing accounts of her beauty and cleverness. For her sake he was sometimes sorry that the inheritance of his forefathers had passed to strangers; but she always comforted him by telling him that if he had not lost all, he would never have seen her; and after all he really liked his hard-working out-

door life. It was manly, free, and independent, for they never suffered such grievous want as had often been their lot at the abbey; and as his children grew up around him Rupert thought less and less of what might have been and thanked God that "the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places."

On the other side of the sea Clive and Margery lived a strangely different life. They had all that wealth could give them and with it heavier cares and greater dangers. Edith's fears had not been groundless. More than once both Sir John and Harold were in great peril of unjust imprisonment, and perhaps worse, but the danger had always passed by before long.

Margery had kept her promise, and had learnt to believe in Jesus by the time that Harold came for her, and when God sent her children she strove prayerfully and humbly to lead them to him. She was a very true friend to her husband's poor tenants. "You see, Hal, I used to be so poor myself," she said one day. "I know exactly how it feels to have naught but bread for dinner and little enough of that. Now, methinks mine only trouble is to see you look so tired and worn."

"Nay, Madge; I am well enough," he said, passing his hand across his brow, which was deeply lined and furrowed. "I heard from John to-day and he says that their little Edith hath

been grievously sick but is better again. And there is ill news from court. The king is like to die."

"Sure, it is very sudden."

"Ay, but too true. I am grieved to think how this poor nation may suffer under a papist sovereign."

"Now, Hal," said Margery, half smiling, "you are at your old trick of crossing of the bridge before you come to it. There hath never been a year since our marriage when it hath not looked ill for us at some time, and yet we are here in peace and comfort still!"

"If James beginneth to persecute those who differ from him, as I scarce doubt he will, we can fly, percnance, to America, and Rupert will show me how to earn our bread there!"

Madge looked at her husband's slight figure with a sigh, saying, "Indeed, Hal, you would not be fitted for it. Besides, it would ill become us to desert our people here, save in the last extremity. I wonder if Rupert is much altered. In his last letter he wrote of his boys as if they were nigh grown up. Oh, I should like to see him!"

Madge had her wish sooner than she expected. That same evening the candles were lighted, the curtains drawn, and her eldest daughter was playing soft low tunes on her virginals when the door was thrown open and a tall, dark-eyed stranger

entered. Much to the amazement of the children he took their mother in his arms and kissed her again and again; then gave his hand to their father, saying, "Forgive my taking you all by storm thus; I had an errand to do to the Council concerning a matter of boundaries and I could not resist coming up hither first."

"You are bigger and browner and stronger, ay, and handsomer, than ever, Ru," said Margery; "but you are not changed otherwise."

Rupert shook his head. "Madge dear, you never used to tell stories. Why, 't is more than seventeen years since we parted! I have a son at home far liker what I used to be."

"Edith says this boy of mine is like you," said Margery. "Here, Hal, come show yourself to Cousin Rupert. To-morrow, methinks, he will have many a strange tale to tell you of life across the ocean. They like my stories of that one year in America better than aught else I can tell them," she added

Rupert laughed. "The favorite story of my little ones is how we dug the abbot's grave for treasure. Have you ever told them that, Madge?"

"It seem like old times," said Clive when the children had left them, "for us three to be gathered together again. I was telling Margery but now that if things go ill here, I shall feel minded to try the New World for a change. Have you heard that the king is dead?"

"Ay; God forgive him for all the ill he hath done! Methinks, Hal, life in America would like you ill."

"Ru," interposed Margery, "I have been trying to make Harold write me a poem again. I am sure I should be proud of it and him."

Clive smiled. "I have not forgot how you laughed over the last; but, seriously, I have other work to do."

"Ay, Ru; did you know he was a Parliament man?"

"I spoke but now of leaving England should trouble come," said Clive slowly; "but perchance 'twas a coward thought. I at least am little changed since the days I fled from the ghost, Ru."

"Nay; rather since the days you watched beside me through the pest. Speaking of the abbot, though, Uncle Geoffrey looketh quite a feeble old man now. His hair is white and his shoulders bent, but he allows himself no ease nor rest. Methinks he is not long for this world. Since grandmother died he hath never ceased his wanderings."

"I trust we shall all be as true to doing of the work God giveth us," said Clive.

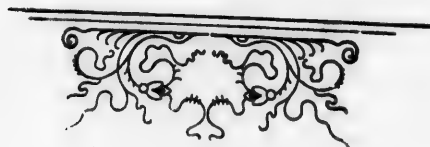
"Let us pray that in the life before us we may all have strength and courage," said Madge.

They knelt together and the prayer was answered for them all. During James' brief but

perilous reign Clive played the part of a noble Christian gentleman and Margery was his true helpmeet; while thousands of miles away Rupert was treading steadily the same uphill path that leads to right and God, though fewer witnessed either his temptations or his victories.



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